PRACTICAL

# DISCOURSES

Upon several

Divine Subjects.

Written by

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Licens'd, July 16, 1691. 3. Icham.

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Divine Subjects.

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### Flie Epille Dedicatory.

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Right Reverend Father in God, RICHARD Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells.

My Lord;

Con merco ino

HE peculiar Honour I justly bave for your Personal Worth concurring with that Reverence I owe to your Episcopal Character, and that bappy Relation wherein I now stand to you as my Dio-A 2 cesan,

### The Epistle Dedicatory.

cesan, obliges me to lay these Papers at your Lordship's Feet; and that which your Eminent Greatness bas made a Debt, your no less Illustriom Goodnessingaurages me to Pay. Upon which Two inducements (the greatest that can be even in Religious as well as Human Address) I bumbly presume to tender these Plain Discourses to your Lord (hip's favourable Perulal Acceptance, which as the fatory Relation reference I ample of the period of the per A 2 cefan,

### The Epistle Dedicatory.

bope are in some measure fitted for the Advantage of the Publick; not so much in refpect of Notion and Speculation, but what is a great deal more wanted in this very Degenerate, though otherwise bigbly Improved Age, the promotion of Piety and good Life. Which great and excellent end that your Lordship may yet much better promote, both by the Prudence of your Government, and by the Brightness and Authority of A 3 your

### The Epistle Dedicatory.

your high Example, to the Honour and Interest of our most excellent Church, and the Glory of our common Lord and Master, shall be the Constant and Zealous Prayer of him whose great Ambition is to be esteemed

we has Your Lordship's

Moft Humble

and Dutiful Servant

To wind the J. Norris of

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To

# READER.

INCE the Publication of my Discourses upon the Beatitudes, having received fome Intimations, that 'tis the earnest defire of feveral Worthy Persons to see some more of my Practical Discourfes; for the gratification of their Pious Curiofity, and for the general Advantage of all other well inclined Persons, I have been perswaded to make a Scrutiny among my Papers, and to pick out a Set of fuch Difcourses as are of the most Practical Composure, and most apt to season the Mind of the Reader with a Tincure of Piety and Vertue: And these I think are of this Character, which I therefore here communicate to the World in the same Matter and Dress for the Main wherein they were first

#### To the Reader.

Pen'd and Preach'd, only bestowing upon them the advantage of a Review, that so they might have that Accuracy and Correctness as might sit them for a Publick Appearance.

I am not infentible how well furnished the Present Age is with Provifions of this kind; fo far from that, that I think we have in this respect much the Advantage above any Age or Place in the World: And I think withal, that if there were a Choice Collection made of our English Sermons, especially of the Later times, it might deserve to wear the Honourable Chain in our Publick Libraries, as well as any the best Curiosities we have there, and indeed to turn out a great many dull Wormcaten Authors, which fill our Stalls, as many Persons do the World, Idly and Infignificantly, and are not worth the Room they take up. And I further think, that if the Scientest parts of these our Modern Sermons were ranged under certain Heads, and judicioully forted and disposed in order, out of these Materials might be framed far the best Body of Divinity, both for

#### To the Reader.

for the Rational and for the Perlinafive part, that is in the World. And tis great Pity but that a convenient number of competent Undertakers (for I think it would be too great a Task for any one Person,) would agree together upon the Performance. It would I am perswaded be a work of excellent use as well as Curiofity, and withal a standing Monument of Shame and Condemnation to those of our Diffenters, who are to Silly and fo impudent, as to make this one of their Pleas for leaving the Church, because they have better Preaching in a Conventicle. Attil of both , suffrabiil ving a that the infirmiont of

But left this should be turned as an Objection against the present performance, that the Age is so rich in these Provisions, I consider withal on the other side, how much in stands in need of them. Its Supplies indeed are great, but its Necessities are as great and greater; and till Men come to be persuaded to live better than they now do more like Men, and more like Christians of think surther Addresses of this nature will be always Scalonable, and will

#### To the Readen.

will be so far from needing an Apology, that they will deserve to be incouraged.

But there is something else that needs it very much, and that is the unproficiency of the World under such extraordinary Advantages: Tis indeed a thing of strange Consideration, and what I have often admired at, that confidering what excellent Preaching and Writing there is now in the World, the World should be no better than it is; that there should be so much good Discoursing, and so little good Living; that the Instrument of Religion should be so much Improved, and Religion it felf fo much Decaved.

It must be allowed that the prefent Age has Advantages of both forts, Preaching and Writing, far beyond what former Ages could ever boast of; and that Christians now have Assistances almost as much beyond those of the Primitive Christians, as theirs were beyond those of the Heathen World; and yet (which

#### To the Reader

(which is both strange and lamentable to consider;) they excelled us as much in Goodness, as we do them in Learning and Knowledge, and were much better without these Advantages than we are with them. No Learning like Modern Learning, no Reasoning like Modern Learning, no Reasoning like Modern Reasoning, and yet no Christianity like Primitive Christianity. Now indeed Christianity is better understood, and better desended, and the Rules of it more rationally inforced, but then twas better Practised: Now we Discourse better, but we live worse.

Vanadian et so dun objection What shall we, what can we say to these things? It is our great Shame, and it will be our Condemnation : But we must not give over Medicinal Applications, though the Disease seems not to yield to them, but rather to rage and increase under them; for though we are really worse under thefe great Affiftances, yet I hope tis not they that contribute to make us to; and if the World be to bad with them, 'tis to be feared it would be in a much worse Condition without them. The Means are therefore to HOW

#### To the Render

and Success be, which is God's concern not ours. And I further confider, that the badness of the Age under the greatest helps to Goodness is so far from being a reasonable disconragement against endeavours of Reformation, that there is great reason to think that God reserves the best Remedies and Assistances against the worst Times, that when the Malignity of the Contagion is at strongest, it may have a Proportionable Antidote.

I am not fo vain as to think my felf interessed in this last Consideration, any further than as it may ferve me with an Answer to an Objection, wherein it is pretended, that Men are the worfe for having fo much Application made to them for their Rucovery, that they fuffer in their Morals by being over-tutour'd, as some Men do in their Health by being over-Phylick'd: The ground of which Objection proceeds I suppose upon this Observation, that when there are the greatest helps and advantages to goodness, the Age is then always worft.

#### To the Reader.

worst. The Observation I consels is too true, but the Consequence that is made from it, may I conceive be taken off, by supposing that this comes to pass by the special Assignment of God's Providence, reserving the best assistances against the worst times, and not by any natural connexion, that is between the things themselves in order to such a Juncure.

Upon these Considerations I am incouraged to fend these Discourses abroad, having this only to fay concerning them, that as the Subjects of them are of extraordinary importance, fo I think they do not fall very much beneath what they undertake for in their several Titles; that they confift of very weighty and ferious matter, and are indifferently Correct as to their Composition; that they speak both to the Reason and to the Affection of the Reader, and are in good measure fitted both to Convince and to Perswade: In short, that they may be read with a great deal of Profit, and not without some Entertainment. The former is the more confiderable.

#### To the Reader.

fiderable end, and 'tis what I mainly aim at; I wish the Reader may do the same, and when both of us concur in so laudable an End, 'tis to be hoped the Blessing of God will not be wanting; and I pray God it may not.

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Upon these Confiders ions I am incouraged to fend thele Difcourfes abroad, having this only to fay concerning them, that as the Subjects of them are of extraordinary imporfamed, for think they do not fall very inuch beneath what they undertake for in their feveral Titles; that they could of very weighty and ferious matter, and see indifferently Corred as to their Composition; that they freak both to the Pealon and to the Affection of the Reader, and are Tood measure litted both to Conwinder and to Perlurade: In thort, that they may be read with a great deal of Ross and not without time Entertalmient The former is the more con-. fiderable

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### DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Worldly and Divine Wisdom.

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Luke 16. 8.

The Children of this World are in their Generation Wiser than the Children of Light.

F all the infinite Follies incident to Mankind, there is none that may more justly imploy both our Pity and our Admiration than an Ill-timed, Misplaced and Disproportionate Wisdom. The thorough Fool is not night so great a Prodigy as the Half-wise B Man;

#### Plactical Discourses upon

Man; nor is a stark uniform Ignorance fo mysterious and unaccountable as an uneven misconducted Prudence. Of this latter we may conceive Two forts, either a proposal of a wrong End, or an undue profecution of a right one. In the former, the Man is supposed to be right enough in his Means, but to be wrong in his End; in the latter, he is supposed to be as right in his End, but to be wrong in his Means. In the former, we consider the Man as Wise in little things, and a Fool in great concerns; Wife where Wifdom might be spared, and a Fool where 'tis highly necessary. In the latter, we confider him as not fo wife in great things, as either himself or another is in little things. And this I take to be a stranger fort of Folly than the former; for here the Man is suppofed to be so wife, as to have aim dat the true Mark, and to have fixed upon a right End, but yet withal at the fame time to be fo much a Foot, as not to profecute this right End as prudently and carefully as the other does a wrong one; which truly is a very odd Combination. 'Tis a great Folly

Folly not to propose a good End, and he that fails in this part, can never expect to have any thing orderly and regular in the whole course of his Life: Such a Man (if he deserve that Name) lives Buckward, and the longer he lives, and the more active and busie he is, the more he is led out of his way, and the further he is from his Journey's End. A Man were better have no Mark before him, but live at Rovers, without any End or Defign at all, than to propose an End to himself that is not good. The former indeed feems to be more fortish and stupid, and to have less of Soul and Thought in it; but the latter. if I mistake not, is more dangerous and mischievous, and will lead a Man into more fatal Miscarriages.

But though it be so great a Folly not to propose a good End, yet it seems a much stranger Folly not to prosecute it when you have proposed it, and when one has attained so far, not to proceed surther: The Reason may be obvious why a Man does not propose a good End, for he may want clearness of Understanding to discern which is so. But he that has proposed aright, shews

a short and a male

by his very doing so, that he does not want that. The rightness of his Aim fufficiently argues the goodness of his Eye-fight, and why then he should not prosecute his well-chosen End, is somewhat unaccountable: And befides, the greatness and the goodness of the End, has a natural and genuin efficacy both to quicken and to regulate the execution of it; and the more confiderable the End is, the more it has of this Influence. As the Means themselves do take their measure from the End, so does the execution of them too, and the more weighty and concerning is the End proposed, the more pressing and urging is the engagement that lies upon the Proposer, both to chuse fit and proper Means for the compassing it and to be diligent in the use and application of them when chosen. So that whether we regard that rational Light and discernment of Mind which he discovers himself to be Master of that proposes a right End, or that aid and affiftance which is communicated to him from the weight and moment of the End it felf, (which cannot but help on its own profecution, ) the Folly of not profecuting a well-proposed End, will appear

appear to be of all others the most strange and amazing.

And yet this is that Folly which is more or less chargeable upon the Wifest of Men; those who have duly considered and taken a just measure both of themselves and of the World without them; that have well examined and fifted out the capacities of their Nature, and the utter insufficiency of all created Good to fill those Capacities; those that have duly prized and valued the whole Inventory of this Worlds Goods, and have fixed a general Inscription of Vanity upon them all, and who accordingly upon the strength of this Conviction, have gone out of the Circle of this World for their Happiness, and have proposed to themfelves the supream Good for their End, and for the wisdom of this their Choice. are stiled Children of Light: Eventhese Men are chargeable with this strange Folly, and it is here actually charged upon them by the eternal and fubstan-tial Wisdom of God in this his weighty Remark upon the Politick Stratagem of the unjust Steward, The Children of delifaciding the reference fere given . them.

#### Practical Discourses upon

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this World are in their Generation, wifer than the Children of Light.

In the Words there is something implied, and something directly afferted. 'Tis implied,

- r. That there are a fort of Men who are Children of this World, that is, who make the Good of this World their End, and seek no surther for their Rest and Happiness. 'Tis implied again on the other side,
- 2. That there are a fort of Men who are Children of Light, who look beyond this Sphere of Vanity, and black Vale of Misery, and propose to themselves the Beatitudes of another Life, as their true and last End; and these our Lord calls Children of Light, both from the Object of their Choice, (the Glories of Heaven being frequently represented in Scripture under the Symbol of Light,) and from their Wisdom in chusing it. Tis implied again,
- g. That the former of these notwithstanding the preserence here given them,

them, do not act according to the meafures of true Wisdom; and therefore our Lord does not fay absolutely that they are Wife, but only that they are Wifer in their Generation.

4. The thing directly afferted by our Lord is this, That notwithanding their want of true Wisdom, (that Wisdom which is from above) they are however wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light. That is, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Provisions for its Attainment and Security, and profecute it by more apt and agreeable Means, and with greater Cunning and Diligence than they who have chosen a better, do theirs. And in this the Children of this World. though great Fools, are yet in their Generation, in their way and manner, Wifer than the Children of Light.

These I shall make distinct Subjects of Discourse; to each of which I shall speak according to the present Order. Bounday a ranger as

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And first of all, 'tis implied, that there are a fort of Men, who are Children of this World, who make the Good of this World their End, and feek no further for their Rest and Happiness. 'Tis I confess strange that there should be any such, considering that the World is no proper Boundary for the Soul even in its Natural Capacity, much less in its Spiritual: Tis too cheap and inconfiderable a Good for an Immortal Spirit, much more for a Divine Nature. And therefore did not the Commonness of the thing take off from the Wonder, 'twould feem no doubt' as great a Prodigy to see a Man make the World his End, as to see a Stone hang in the Air. For what is it else for a Man, the weight of whose Nature presses hard towards a stable and never failing Center, to Stop short in a fluid and yielding Medium, and take up with the flender stays of Vanity, and lean upon the Dream of a Shadow? I fay, why is not this to be look'd upon as equally strange and preternatural, as a Stone's hanging in the Air? Is not the Air as proper a Boundary for a Stone, as the World is for a Soul? And why then is not one as strange as the other?

#### several Divine Subjects.

other? For in the First place, one would think it next to impossible, that a Man who thinks at all, should not confider frequently and thoroughly the vanity and emptiness of all Worldly Good, the shortness and uncertainty of Life, the certainty of Dying, and the uncertainty of the Time when; the Immortality of the Soul, the doubtful and momentous Issues of Eternity, the Terrours of Damnation, and the Glorious things which are spoken, and which cannot be uttered of the City of God. These are Meditations so very obvious, fo almost unavoidable, and that so block up a Mans way 5 and befides they are so very important and concerning, that for my part I wonder how a Man can think of any thingelfe. And if a Man does confider and revolve these things, one would think it yet more impossible that he should make so vain a thing as this World, his End; that he should think of Building Tabernacles of Rest on this side the Grave, and fay, it is good to be here. So that upon the whole matter, were a Man put to the Question, whether 'twere possible that a Rational and Thinking Creature, as Man is should be so far a Child of this

eidt.

this World, as to make the Good of it his End, and seek no further for Rest and Happines; were a Man I say to consider this only in Notion and Theory, without having any recourse to Observation and Experience, he would go nigh to resolve the Question in the Negative, and think it impossible that he who is capable of Chusing at all, should Chuse so ill.

But, whether 'tis that Men do not heartily believe such a thing as a future ftate of Happiness and Milery; or if they do, that they do not actually and feriously consider it, but suffer it to lye dormant and unactive within them. and so are as little affected with it. as if they did not believe it; or that they look upon it through that End of the Perspective which respresents it as a great way off, and so are more vigoroully drawn by the Nearer, though Lesser Loadstone; or whatever other cause may be assigned for it, we are too well affured from Experience. that there are such Men in the World: Men, who going through the Vale of Pfal. 84. 6. Mifery, use it not only as a Well to refresh and allay, but fully to quench

and

and satisfy their Thirst; Thirst in the performance of their Being and relish Earthly things, who make the Good of this World their last Aim, the Sum total of their Wishes, the upshot of their Desires and Expectations, their End: Who love it as they are Commanded to love God, with all their Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength, who rest and lean upon the World with the whole stress and full weight of their Being, who out-do the Curse of the Serpent, and whose very Soul cleaves to the Dust.

For I demand, Is not the Interest of this Animal Life, the great Governing Principle of the World? Are not the Policies of the Statesman, and the little Under-crasts of the Plebeian all put into Motion by this Spring, and all guided and determined by this Measure? Is not every thing almost reckoned Profitable only so far as it conduces to some Temporal Interest, in so much that the very Name Interest, is almost appropriated to World-ly Advantage? And is not this the great Bias of Mankind? Is not most of the Noise and Bustle that is in the World,

World, about the World it felf, who shall have the greatest Share of it, and make the greatest Figure in it? Do we not see Men all set and intent upon the World, that lay themselves out wholly upon it, and that can relish nothing but what has relation to it? Men that feem to grow into the Soil where they dwell, and to have their Heads and Hearts fastened to the Ground with as many Cords and Fibres, as the Root of a Tree; and that feem to be staked down and nailed fast to the Earth, and that can no more be moved from it, than the Earth it felf can from its Center: In one word, Men of whom it may be faid without Cenfure, that the World is their God, and its Pleafores, Honours, and Profit, their Trinity.

Nor is this matter of Pradice only, but of Opinion too; for we know there have been some among the Antient Philosophers, who have expressly taught, that the End of Man, the Totum Hominis, lies in the Good of the Animal Life, in the Pleasure of the Grosser Senses. Thus we know did Aristippus, Cyrenaus, and a whole Sect of Phir

Philosophers after him, called Cyrenaici; which Opinion is also charged upon Epicurus by Cicero, and by many of the Fathers of the Church : And the Charge is still believed and entertained among many Persons of sufficient Learning and Worth, notwithstanding the favourable and plaufible Plea Monfieur Gassendi has offered in the behalf of his Master. But the best Plea is, that these are Pardonable in comparifon of those who enjoy the Advantages of a Revealed Religion, and that in its last Perfection and Consummation too, and yet take no higher aim than at the Good of this World, and in direct Contradiction to our Saviours Aphorism, think that the Life, that is the true Interest and Happi-Luke 12. ness of Man does consist in the A. 15. bundance of things which he poffelles, in high solicing to signify

To our Experience, we may add the Attestations of Scripture, which gives several intimations of this lowsunk, wretched and deplorable Degeneracy of Soul. To instance in a few, does not Job say in vindication of his Integrity, If I have made Gold my Hope, Job 31.24.

and fave to the Fine Gold. Thou are to

or have faid to the Fine Gold, thou att my Confidence ? Implying that fome there were that did fo. And does not Pfal. 52. & the Pfalmift fay, Lo this is the Man that took not God for his Strength, but trafted in the multitude of his Richer, and Arengthened himself in his Wickedness? And does not the Apostle tell us of Phil. 3.19. some whose God is their Belly, and of 1Tim. 6.5. others, whose Godliness is their Gain? And what elfe does the Apostle mean, when he fays of Covetoufneft, that it is Idolatra? Does he not thereby intimate, that the Coverous Wretch not only delights in his Possessions, and loves to count over his Heaps, (for this a Man may do without being an Idolater, ) but that he places his End and chief Happiness in his Treasures, that he falls down and adores his Golden Calfs and in the forementioned Phrase of Job, makes Gold his Hope,

> But the Minds of Men (thanks be to God) are not all under this Eclypfe, nor is this Darkness spread over the whole Face of the Deep 3 Light and Darkness divide the Moral as well as

> and fays to the Fine Gold, Thou art my

the Attelfactors of Serberge,

the Natural World, though with the difference of unequal Proportions; the Darker is here the bigger fide. There are however, though not fo many, yet there are Secondly, a fort of Men who are Children of Light, whose Minds are more Illuminated, and their Eve more clear and fingle, who look beyoud the Veil of the Material World. the Beauty of which can neither charm, nor its Thickness detain their piercing Sight, and propole to themselves the Beatitudes of another Life as their true and last End. This many do in Profelfion, and fome in Reality: In Profession all Christians do it, to whom therefore the Title of Children of Light is promiscuously given by the Apostle, Te are all the Children of Light, 1 Thes. 5. and the Children of the Day; We are not s. of the Night, nor of Darkness: That is, as far as concerns Profession and Solemn Undertaking. But that which all Christians profess, some do really do, proposing to themselves Habitually at least, the Happiness of the other World as their last End, being by repeated Experiences, as well as rational Reflections upon the Nature of things, abundantly convinced of the vanity

of this. And these indeed aim at the right Mark, though all of them have not a Hand steddy enough to hit it.

arê Secocity, a fort at Men who

But to return again to the Children of this World, 'tis implied in the Third Place, that these do not act according to the Mediures of true Wisdom; for our Lord does not fay abfolutely that they are Wife, but only that they are Wifer in their Generation; which implies, that absolutely speaking, and upon the whole, they are not Wife. Indeed they think themselves Wise, and the World for the most part is of their Opinion: They are generally esteemed not only Wife, but the only Wife Men, Men of Reach and Defign, Policy and Conduct; and he that does not play his Game, fo as to thrive in the World, is generally pitied, more for his Folly than for his Poverty. Nay hence, and hence only, are taken the Measures of Wisdom and Prudence, and this is made the Rule and Standard of all Policy and Discretion; a Man is counted so far Wife, and no farther, than he knows how to get an Estate, to raise a Family, to give Birth to a Name, and make himself great and considerable in the World: He that can do this, is a Shrewd Man, and he that can't, is either Pitied or Laught at (according to the Humour the World's in) by those that can.

Neither is it any Allay or Abatement of their Character, to fay that all this is brought about by Sinister and Indirect Means, by Fraud and Cousenage, by Deceit and Corrup Proceedings: This rather Commends the Parts and Ingenuity of the Man, thews him to be a Man of Art and Contrivance, and that he owes his Success more to good Management, than good Fortune; nay, he that can do thus, is the Topping Wise Man, and is thought worthy not only to have, but so far to ingross the Name, that a Shrewd Cunning Man (even in their own Language) is but another Word for a Knave. This is the general Sense of the World.

But whatever the Opinion of Men may be, we are affured by the Apostle who had Conversed in the other World 1 Cor. 3. as well as in this, that the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God; and if so, to be sure 'tis Foolishness in it self, since the Intellect of God is the Measure of all Truth. And the Psalmist speaking of Worldly-Minded Men, that think their Houses shall continue for ever, and call their Lands after their own Names, says expresly,

Pfal.49.13. This is their Foolishness. And this Censure he boldly charges upon them, how
singular soever it might seem; and
though not only the present Generation of Men should vote them Wise,
but even their Posterity; those of more
Improved Reasonings, and more Inlarged Experience, should praise their
Saving.

Thus light do these Men weigh in the Ballance of the Sanctuary; nor will they be found to be less wanting in that of Reason: For how can they deserve the Title of Wise Men, who are out in the very first and leading part of Wisdom, the Chusing of a Right End? This is such a mighty Flaw, as nothing that comes after can make up or Compensate for. When once a Man has fixed himself a wrong End, he has cut

out a false Chanel for the whole Course of his Life, which must needs be ever after one continued Mistake, one constant Blunder; and though he be never so Ingenious afterward, to compass this End, his Wisdom comes too late, and does but serve to insure and hasten his Ruin. The Ship indeed has good Sails, there is nothing wanting to the Executive part; but steering to a wrong Point it has this only advantage from them, to be dashed upon the Rock with the greater Speed and Violence.

The short is, no Man is, or ought to be accounted Wise for that where in he is Mistaken; and that this is the case of those who propose to themselves false Ends is most certain: For no Man proposes any End but what he takes to be Good, and sit to be Prosecuted, Evil as Evil being not within the Possibilities of Choice, when ther as to the End or as to the Means. If therefore the End prove really Evil (which is here supposed to be the Case,) 'tis otherwise than what he thought it, and consequently he was abused and imposed upon in his Choice.

And now let him play his After-game never so well, and pursue this his false End by never so apt and compendious Methods, the most he can pretend to, is to drive well in a false Road, and the most he can justly expect is to be thought a Cunning, but he must never set up for a Wise Man. He may indeed pass for such an one among the Many, as an Ill Acted Part is commonly the most Applauded by the injudicious Rabble of the Theatre. But his Wildom is now Foolishness with God. the only exact and unerring. Judge, and will one day be made appear so to Angels and Men. Then also shall the Children of this World, who have been so often admired and cryed up for their extraordinary Depth and Reach, and been reckon'd the Sharpest Intreaguers and Projectors, the very Machiavels of their Age, confess and lament their own great Folly and Weakness, (when yet 'tis too late to be Wise,) and admire the Wisdom as well as the strange Salvation of those whose Life they once thought Madness.

TO CHARLES OF DEPOSITE

And thus I have done with the Three things implied in the Text; I now proceed in the Fourth place to the thing directly Afferted: Which is that notwithstanding the want of true Wisdom in the Children of this World. they are however Wifer in their Generation than the Children of Light. Or in other Words, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Provisions for its Attainment and Security, and Profecute it by more agreeable Means, and with more Cunning and Diligence, than they who have Chosen a Better, do theirs. They are indeed worse Proposers, but they are better Executors, Worle Defigners, but better Contrivers. They come vally short indeed of the Children of Light in the First part of Wildom, the Choice of a right End, in which reforce the Child of Eight has as much the Precedency in point of Wildom, as Heaven is better than Earth; but then they exceed them as much in the Se cond, the Choice and Application of right Means. .. hower O found negri busti

But

Now this I shall make appear Two ways; First, Antecedently, by considering what Grounds of Probability there are that it should be so. Secondly, a Posteriori, by Comparing the Proceedings of each of these Men, whereby it will appear that it is so.

Or in other Wards, that have

And First, there are Grounds of Probability and Presumption that it should be for For it may be confidered in the First place, that the Children of this World having chofen the Good of the Animal Life for their End, must be supposed to fer the fame value upon it, and to look upon it with the same Eye that the Children of Light do upon Glory and Happis ness; And this not withstanding all its real Vanity and Emptines: For did they fee and perceive that they would never have chosen it for their End's and if they do not, then it is all one to them, as if it were a Solid and Substantial Good, and they prize it accord dingly. Thus far therefore they both fland upon equal Ground. sassal trigin

woll

But then Secondly, 'Tis to be confidered, that although these two Ends considered Absolutely and Simply in themselves, are alike valued by their respective Proponents, (for then is a thing at the highest value, when 'tis made an End,) yet one of the Scales may and will receive some moments of Advantage more than the other, from some Accidental and Collateral Circumstances, which may more sensibly indear one of these Ends, and give it a more Commanding Insluence over the Soul that proposes it: Which indeed is the present case.

For 1st, The good things of this World are Present, those of the other Remote and Distant: How far distant we don't know, and are therefore apt to fancy the farthest remove; like Travellers, that think the Way always longest, where they are the greatest Strangers. Now we know a present Good has a great Advantage above a far distant and late Reversion. A Candle that is near, affects us more than the San a great way off, and by its Neighbourhood, outdoes the others C 4 Bigness.

Bigness. And as'tis in distance of Place, so is it in distance of Time; a present Good though it be less, is more affecting and inviting, than one of a more Sizeable Dimension, if it be Future and there is more Force and Vertue in one Single Now, than in many Hereafters. Tis not in the Moral as in Physical Statics; there indeed that Weight weighs heaviest, which is furthest removed from the Centre of Motion; but here the nearer the Weight, the stronger is its Power: And there is this convincing Reason for it, the Good that is Present, opens it self all at once to the Soul, and acts upon it with its full and intire Force; there is not fo much as a Ray of its Light but what strikes us. But now that which is future, is feen by Parts and in Succeffion, and a great deal of it is not feen at all; like the Rays of a too distant Object which are too much dispersed before they come at us, and so most of them mis the Eye. This makes the least Present Interest, outweigh a very confiderable Reversion, fince the former ftrikes upon ds with the strong Influence and Warmth of the Neighbouring Sun, the latter with the

the Faint and Cold Glimmerings of a Twinkling Star. And accordingly the Holy Ghost takes notice of it, as an extraordinary thing in Moses, and that argued him to be a Person of great Presence and Discernment of Mind, that he could so rightly Calculate his Interest, as to preser the Future Rewards of Heaven, before the Present Glories of Egypt.

Authentick.) as we do to what we Then 2dly, The Good Things of this World are not only Present and at Hand, but Sire and Certain; I mean as to us, for the other are no less for in themselves. We are fure Job. 28. (as fob fays) that there is a Vein for the Silver, and a Place for Gold where they fine it. Our Senses inform us of this, and that's a Testimony we seldom rejed. As for the place of Happinels, we have heard the Fame thereof indeed with our Ears, but have neither feen it our felves, nor discoursed with those that have; and although is affured to us with as much Evidence as is confistent with the Nature and Vertue of Faith, nay with almost as much as a thing Future is capable of 5 yet Darkness and Fear commonly go todouble to gether,

gether, and Men are generally very jealous and distrustful about things whereof they are ignorant, or half informed, as imperfect Eyes are apt to start. And though the Principles of Raith are in themselves as Firm and Firmer than those of Stience, yet to us tis not so Evident; nor do we ever assent so strongly to what we Believe (be the Testimony never so Authentick,) as we do to what we know that we know the start of the start of

Then 3dly, The Good Things of this World, as they are Present and Sure, to do they fitike upon the most Tender and Impressible part about us, our Senfes. They attempt us, as the Devil did Adam; in our Weaker part, chrough the Eve of our Natures. A Sensible Representation is the strongest of all Representations ; a Sensible Reprefentation even of the Vanity of the World work more with us, than the Discourse of an Angel about it y and I question not, but that Alexander the Great was more inwardly affected when he faw the Ruins of the Grave of Grow, when he faw to great Power reduced to fuch Narrow Limits, ecther, fuch fuch Majesty seated on such a Throne; the Monarch of Afia Hid, or rather Loft in an Obscure Cave, a Stone for his Bed, Cobwebs for his Tapeltry, and all his Pomp and Glory turned into Night and Darkness ; I say, he was more Convinced of the Vanity of Greatness by this lively Appeal to his Senfes, than he ever was or could be by all the grave Lectures of his Master Ariftotle. And if the Venity of the World when represented routhe Sen fes, has fach vigorous Effects upon them, what shall we think of the Glory of it when to Represented by How would that Affect and Subdue us have I a Olafs darkly, 16, Seen as not to be

And this the Devil very well knew and confidered, when he was to Vempt the Son of God; his Delign was to decoy him into Coveronnels and Ambition, and in order to this, he might have entertained him with fine Different about the Wealth and Glories of the Terrestrial Globe, and have trad him a Geographical Letime upon the Kingdoms and Empires of it; but he knew his Advantage better than followed the challenges him, and prefer him with

2 Cor. 4.

with a Sensible Idea of all this, knowing by old Experience how much more apt the Senses are to take Impression, than any other faculty of Man,

exterior probable bencome with the

Now this is the great advantage that the Good Things of this World have, they are obvious to our Senses, we See them, we Hear them, We Smell them, we Task them, we Feel and Handle them, and have the most intimate and indearing Conversation with them; The things that are Temporal are Seen, says the Apostle: 'Tis their distinguishing Character.' But the things that are Eternal are not seen, but only through a Glass darkly, so Seen as not to be discerned, and in reference to the other World, as the same Apostle says,

Cor. 5.7. We walk by Faith and not by Sight.

ral Advantages which the Things of this World have above those of the next it may in the First place be pre-funed, that those who have erred so says to make this their End, are in all probability like to Love it more intensely, and value it more highly than the Children of Light do their End, which wants these Sensible Intensely.

dearments and Recommendations. Well, and if so, then it further follows, that of necessity they must be more heartily concerned for its Attainment, and consequently more Wary in the Choice, and more Diligent in the Use of such Means as serve to that purpose. For the Love of the Means always receives its Measure from that of the End.

And thus we see what grounds of probability there are, that it should be so. I come now in the Second Place, briefly to compare the Proceedings of each of these Men, whereby it will appear, that de facto it is so.

And here First, we find by Experience, that the Men of this World do prefer their Secular Interest above all other things whatsoever; and that not only in Notion and Theory, Habitually and in General, (for that's supposed in its being made their End,) but also in every instant of Action, in all Junctures and Circumstances. Though their End be False, yet they are not so, but keep true to it, and always prefer

it, retaining in every point of Action the very fame sense and Judgment they had of it when they first made it their Choice. And so fatisfy that they are in good earnest, they will adhere to it at any rate, they will forfeit any Good, and undergo any Evil to Secure this their grand Stake. For will they not Rife Early, and Late take Rest, Drudge and Toil, Plot and Contrive, Cheat and Defraud, Lye and Diffemble, be of any Religion, or of no Religion, and submit to all the Balenesses imaginable, to Get or Secure or Recover a Place of Honour or Profit? Will they not incur the Curfes of the Widow and Orphan, the Contempt of Wife Men, the Hatred of Mankind, the Cenfures of Posterity, the Displeature of God, and even Damnation it felf for the fake of their beloved Mammon? They will; they will bustle through all this, and will gain their Point, though they lose e-very thing besides: And herein they are confiltent with themselves, they act agreeably to their Principles.

But now will the Children of Light do much for their End? Will these part

part with the World for Heaven, as the other will part with Heaven for the World? Will these do or suffer any thing for the Interest of their Souls, as the other will for that of their Bodies? Some few there are that will, and God add to their Number. But are there not many who Habitually and in General, have proposed to themselves Heaven for their End, and fo far are supposed to give in the Preference as bove all; and yet when they come to be fet upon by a Temptation, to have before them the Charms of Pleasure, or the Terrors of Pain or to be preffed with either Hopes of Gain, or Fear of Loss; in short, when they come to have anyother confiderable Interest brought into Competition with that which they made their End, will they not then fuffer a present Interruption of their former Judgment, and actually undervalue what they Habitually prefer? Will they not enter into a Cloud of Darkness and Obscurity, lose the prefent Light of their former Convictions, and fo act as Foolifhly as those that never had any better Principles por truer Sentiments & Will they not prove Falle to their Cause and to themselves. make

make a Foolish Exchange, let go the Substance, and catch at the Shadow? Will they not refuse to take up the Crown for sear of the Thorns that guard it, and chuse rather to lose Heaven, than be Translated thither in a Fiery Chariot? Yes, 'tis to be seared that most of them will; and that of those many that have proposed Heaven as their End, there are but sew that would have the Courage to be Martyrs for it.

Again Secondly, The Children of this World as they will spare no Pains, fo will they lote no Time or Opportunity for the Securing a Temporal Intereft. They greedily Seize upon the next Minute, take Opportunity by the Forelock, and make hafte to be Rich, though by doing fo, they know they shall not be Innocent. They carefully observe every Season, lay hold upon the First that comes, and will be fure to strike Sail with the very next Wind that will carry them to their Port. They know very well, that the prefent time is the only time they are Masters of, and that they may reckon upon as their own, and therefore that they

they will be fure to Improve, and not trust to the Uncertainties and Contingencies of Futurity. Let but a Question arise about their Title to their Estate, and they can't Sleep till it be clear'd up and Consirm'd. Let but a Place of Dignity or Profit fall, and with what Expedition do these Eagles repair to the Carcase! They take the Wings of the Morning, perhaps of the Night too, and fly as if Running for a Prize, or Chased by an Enemy.

But now, are the Children of Light fuch Prizers of Time, and fuch Improvers of Opportunity? 'Twere well if they were. For what is more common than to fee Men, not only the profesfedly Wicked and Profligate, but even those who have set their Faces Sionward; and propose Heaven as their End. to prograftinate and adjourn their Repentance from Day to Day, from Month to Month, from Year to Year, to delay their Preparations for Eternity, and to Sleep Soundly and Securely, in a Doubtful and sometimes in a Damnable and Irreconciled State; and all this, though they know how fhort and uncertain their Lives are, that 'tis bué

but a Breath and a Vapour that soon passes away, and we are gone. Though they know that there is but this one Eccl. 9.10. time of Probation, and that there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave. Though they 2Cor. 6.2. know that Now is the Accepted time, that Now is the Day of Salvation.

Again Thirdly, the Children of this World, as they will lose no Time, so neither will they let flip any other Advantage of advancing their Fortunes, and of providing against a Wet Day. They twist their own Interest with the Interest of their Friends, seek out for all Helps, and make use of the Best. and take the advantage of every Rifing Ground. They have also a quick Eye upon all Revolutions, suppose themselves in all Possible Cases, and make early Preparations for every Accident. They fit like Wary and Watchful Spiders in the Heart of their Webs, and there with a quick and perceptive Sense, they feel out the least Disturbances that threaten the Security of their little Tenement. Nor do they fmell out Danger more fuddenly than they provide against it. Thus the uniust

just Steward, when he foresaw he should quit his Office, and in that his Livelyhood, and be turned loose to the wide World, he presently bethought him of a Plank to Swim upon, made an Interest with his Lords Debtors, by under-rating their Accounts, that so when his Master should Discard him, they in Requital of his Kindness, might Receive and Harbour him.

But now are the Children of Light so careful to make use of all Helps and Means that may further them in the Attainment of their Great End? Such as the Grace of God, Happiness of Temper and Complexion, Good Education, Well-disposed Circumstances of Life, the Good Examples of others, Advice of Spiritual Persons, and the like. Besides, are they also so Frugal and Provident, so Forecasting and Contriving for the future? Are they fo careful in the day Grace to lay up in Store against a Spiritual Famine, in the days of Peace to Store themselves with Spiritual Armour against the time of Persecution, in the time of Life and Health to provide against the Hour of Sickness and Death, and by a Wise Dif-D 2

Dispensation of the Fading and Unrighteous Mammon, to procure to themselves everlasting Habitations? Are they? Every ones Experience and Observation may assure him that they are not.

Once more, the Children of this World, as they Catch at all Advantages that may further their Grand Affair, so are they withal as careful to avoid all Occasions of Loss and Damage; they love to tread upon Firm Ground, Thun Hazards as well as actual Misfortunes, and won't fo much as come within the Smell of Danger. How Shy is the Man of Interest, of lighting among fuch Company as he thinks will be apt to Borrow Mony of him, draw him into Suretyship, or betray him into any Expences! Does he not fly from these as from the Snares of Death, or from the Face of a Serpent?

But do the Children of Light take the same Care to avoid all Appearances of Evil, all Spiritual Dangers, and all Occasions and Temptations of Sinning against God and their own Happiness? We We Pray indeed, and our Saviour has taught us to do fo, that God would not Lead us into Temptation? But don't we often lead our Selves into as Bad as the Worst of those we can Pray against? We venture oftentimes causelessly and rashly within reach of the Devil's Chain, and are not afraid to ftir up and awake that Roaring Lion: We love to play with Danger, to handle Knives and Razors, to walk upon Slippery Ground, to stand upon Turrets and Battlements. and to hazard our Vertue and Innocence by Needless, and sometimes Doubtful Trials, where if we should Overcome, the Victory would scarce attone for the Imprudence. So much do the Children of this World exceed the Children of Light in Wiffines the will may I carn in Charle. mob

Thus it is, and to our great shame we must Confess it: There is no Doubt or Dispute in the Victory, the Contention has been all along very unequal, and the Odds very apparent; we are utterly Distanc'd in the Race, and see the Prize of Wisdom born away before us. We have D3 indeed

indeed in our Eye a much Nobler Mark, but we want a Steddy Hand. Our End is better than theirs, but our Management is not fo good. And what a shame is it for us that have proposed a Greater and a Better End, and are also more Instructed in the Choice of Means, (which are pointed out and described to us by God himfelf,) to be yet fo far out-witted by those of Lower Aims, and who are fain to Study and Contrive their own Means, and whose Wisdom after all, is Foolishness with God! And yet thus it is, the Devil's Scholars are better Proficients than Christ's Disciples; the Ark falls before Dagon, and Light is outshone by Darkness.

What therefore remains, but that fince we will not Learn in Christ's, we should be sent to the Devil's School, and imitate the Politicks of the Dark Kingdom, and of the Children of this World? Imitate them I say, not in the Choice of the End, (which indeed is very Poor and Low,) but in that Wisdom, Diligence and Care wherewith they prosecute it, and be as Wise at least unto Salvation, as they are to Destruction.

Destruction. Go to the Aunt thou Slug-Prov. 6.6.]
gard, says Solomon, consider her Ways,
and he Wise. And may I not in like
manner bespeak the greatest part even
of Piously disposed Christians, Go to
the Men of the World, and learn Wisdom?

Let us then be as Wise as these Serpents; and since we have Chosen the Better Part, and are so nigh to the Kingdom of God, let us not for the want of One thing, miss of being compleatly Wise and Happy. But as we have made a good Choice, let us prosecute it with equal Prudence. So will our Wisdom be Whole and Intire; Uniform and Consistent, Blameless and Irreprehensible; in a Word, that Wisdom which shall be Justified of all ber Children.

## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Righteous and Unrighteous

Judgment.

John 7. 24.

Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge Righteous Judgment.

HAT which the great Defcartes makes necessary to a Philosopher, is indeed no less so to a Christian; to strip and devest himself of all Prejudices and Partialities, to unravel all his former Sentiments, to unthink all his Pre-conceived

ceived Opinions, and so reduce his Soul to the natural Simplicity of a Blank Table, and to the Indifferency of an even and well-poised Ballance. For as it matters much in reference to our Actions, what our Sentiments and Judgments of things are (because we always act as at that present instant we think,) so does it to the Regularity and Uprightness of our Judgments what the Temper and Disposition of our The Wise Ben-Sirach has Mind is. long since observed, that Wisdom will not enter into a Polluted Spirit; and St. Paul, that the Animal Man perceives not 1 Cor. 2.14. the things of God. There are it seems some Moral as well as Natural Dispositions of the Man that make the Soul unfit for Knowledge, and till thefe Scales fall off from her Eyes, the cannot see. But the Pythagoreans went higher, and taught their Disciples, youεισμον άπο τε σώματ . σρός το καλώς pixooopsiv, that they must separate and unwind themselves even from their very Bodies, if they would be good Philosophers. This in a Qualified and Corrected Sense is true, for the Body is the great Impediment and Disadvantage of the Soul, and therefore all Bodily pestage

Bodily Passions and Inclinations, as well as Intellectual Habits and Appetites must be put to Silence, in the still and Attentive Search and Inquiry after Truth. But to the present purpose, it will be enough to remark, that Prejudices and Prepossessions as well as vitious Habits, a cross Constitution, and a gross Texture of Blood and Spirits, do Cloud and Pervert the Understanding, and take away the Key of Knowledge. This is that Veil which (as the Apostle complains,) re-

2 Cor. 3.4. which (as the Apostle complains,) remain'd untaken away upon the fews, in the Reading of the Old Testament, and which hindered them from understanding it, and made them stand out in defiance against all the Divine Precepts and Convincing Works of the Son of God, whose Divinity through this Veil of Prejudice they could not discern. It was a greater hindrance to them in distinguishing the Character of his Person, than the Veil of his own Flesh was, or the Mystery of the Incarnation. This therefore must be removed by the Christian as well as by the Philosopher, and the Soul must be Purged before it can be Enlightened, Freed from Prejudices and falle Appearances

pearances before it can be from Errors and Misapprehensions. Without this Purity of Heart, there will be so little Clearness of Head, that let our Parts stand upon never so great Advantages, either of Art or of Nature, we shall neither be right in our Determinations of things, nor just in our Centure of Persons: neither Wife in our Difcourfes, nor Righteous in our Sentences; we shall neither maintain Truth nor Charity. All which is briefly Intimated and fummarily Contained in this Admonition of our Saviour to the prejudiced and partially affected Jews, judge not according to the Appearance, but judge Righteom Judgment.

In Discourfing upon which Words, I shall First of all Inquire, what it is in general to judge according to Appearance?

Secondly, Whether all judging according to Appearance, be opposed to judging Righteons Judgment, and consequently here forbidden?

Thirdly, If all be not, which it is that is to?

Laftly,

Lastly, I shall shew the great Reafonableness and Necessity of the Precept, and Conclude.

I begin with the first Inquiry, what it is in general to Judge according to Appearance. Now this will be best known by Confidering the import of the Terms severally. By Judging therefore, is properly understood that action of the Mind which either joins the Attribute with the Subject, or separates it from it. Or to speak less Artificially, and more to Common Apprehension, which either Affirms or Denies one thing of another. By Appearance, I understand the Representation of the Object to the Mind, with its Motives and Arguments, true or falle, in order either to Assent or Dissent. So that to Judge according to Appearance, is in other Words to Affirm or Deny one thing of another, upon the representation of certain Arguments or Motives, to Believe, Think, or to be Assured that a thing is so or so, uppon such and such Grounds; and so it takes in the Three-fold kind of Affent, and that in all the variety of Degree, Faith, villa.

Faith, Opinion, and Science, with this only difference between them, that whereas Faith and Opinion do not necessarily suppose a Firm Foundation, but are indifferent to due and undue Appearances, (for a Man may believe and think upon salse as well as upon good Grounds.) Science does always suppose a due and regular Appearance of the Object, and cannot proceed but upon sufficient Grounds.

And this I think sufficient in Answer to the First Question; I proceed therefore to inquire Secondly, whether all Judging according to Appearance, be opposed to judging Righteous Judgment, and consequently here forbidden. But we need not inquire long about it, for 'tis most certain that all is not; for if it were, there could then be no fuch thing as that Righteons Judgment which our Saviour Commands, and therefore Supposes. Nay, there could be no fuch thing as Judging at all, because all manner of Judgment is grounded upon the Appearance of things, and without some motive of Perswasion, some shew of Truth, no Man can in any degree be Per-

Perswaded. For the Understanding can no more be determined without an Appearance of Truth, than the Will can without an Appearance of Good: And consequently 'tis as absurd, that all Judging according to Appearance should be Criminal, as that all Willing according to Appearance should be so. For then indeed all manner of Judgment would be Unrighteous, and a Man could not use his Intellectual Faculty, but he must Sin; which would introduce a new and unheard of Scepticism into the World, and oblige Men to suspend the Exercise of their Intellectual Powers, not because there is no Truth, but because 'tis not lawful to Embrace her.

Since therefore, all Judging according to Appearance, is not opposed to Righteous Judgment, nor consequently here Forbidden, it concerns us to inquire in the Third place, which it is that is so.

And First to Judge ill of a Man upon clear and full Evidence, is not that Judging according to Appearance, which is here Forbidden, as opposed to Righteous Judgment: Nav this is the most Righteous Judgment that can be, for this is the due use of our Judging Faculty, in the right Exercise whereof, 'tis impossible there should be any Miscarriage. I do not make a meer Judging Rightly, or according to what is True, to be a due use of our Understandings; for though a Man give his Judgment according to Truth, yet if he be determined to such an Affent by incompetent Motives, he does not use his Understanding aright; but if it be in a matter of bare Speculation, is guilty of Levity and Rashness; if in a thing wherein his Brothers Reputation is concerned, of Uncharity and Censoriousness, But if my Judgment of another be never fo Ill, provided the Evidence be Full and Clear. I make a right use of my Judging Faculty, nor can my Judgment be taxed as Unrighteous. And upon this Principle relies all the Innocence and Equity of Courts of Justice, the severest of whose Verdicts are Justified by the Sufficiency of the Evidence.

And there is the same common Reas fon and Measure for the more Private Court of Conscience, that there is for the more Publick ones, and that which warrants the Proceedings of either, will justifie both; so that if it be lawful for a Jury to bring in a Verdict of the highest Guilt against a Man upon clear Evidence, any Private Person may also upon the like Grounds pass the like Ill Judgment concerning any Man within his own Breast, and in his Thoughts pronounce him a Criminal, if he has good Evidence for such a Judgment. Thus if I fee a Man live in a constant course of Vice, in open Defiance to all Laws both Human and Divine, to Wallow in all manner of Bestiality, and drink down Iniquity with Greediness, I may safely and innocently pronounce him an Ill Man. First, because 'tis not in a Man's Power to suspend such a Judgment, any more than tis to refift a Demonstration in Mathematicks. The Truth thrusts her felf upon me, and I cannot put her back, she will be Imbraced and I cannot refuse her; I may wink against the Sun, but I cannot shut my Eyes against

to

gainst Manifest Truth: And to pretend Charity here, is ridiculous; for however Charity may oblige me to Believe and Hope the Best where there is any room for a favourable Construction, yet certainly it does not oblige me to put out my Eyes, and reject all the Information of my Senses: Neither is it possible for me to do fo. But suppose I could refift such a Judgment, yet I med not, because Secondly, in such a Case there is no wrong done to the Party whom my Cenfure concerns: He is represented in a faithful Glass, censured after his due Character, and called by his proper Name, and therefore earnot complain of an Injury. without committing one. O full of Acts 13.10 all Subtilty and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteouspess, said St. Paul to Elymas the Sorcerer, when he faw him endeavouring to turn away the Deputy from the Christian Faith. And have not 1 chosen Twelve, and one of you is a Devil, faid our Bleffed Saviour. Both thefe Charges went very high; but the Evidence of the Guilt bore Proportion to them, and that was their Instification. 'Tis therefore very Warrancable

to pass a Severe Judgment upon a Man, when tis plain and out of question that he deserves it. Nay 'tis not only Warrantable, but in feveral refpects of great use and necessity s for by this Means I am instructed to inlarge my Litany, both for his Converfion, and for my own Deliverance, to apply Reproofs and Advices with all other Methods of Reformation, to beware of his Contagion my felf, and in great Measure to prevent its diffusion among others. Whereas if we fuffer our Eyes to be for far blinded by a pretended Charity, as not to see the Devil under his Monastick Disguise. he has what he could wish, and what Ill Menale to wish;

Nociem Peccatis, & Francibus ob-

to be Skreen'd about with the Shades of Night, and to Sin in a Cloud, and will do the more Mischief for not being better Understood, and Psal 91.6. destroy like the Pestilence that malketh in Darkness.

steament of the contract of the But

But Secondly, to judge Ill of a Man upon such a Concurrence of shrewd Circumstances as makes up what we call a Moral Demonstration, is not that judging according to Appearance. which is here Condemned. This is alfo frequently rely'd upon in Courts of Justice, where Sentence of Death is often given upon such Evidence; nay the greatest part of Human Affairs is known to turn upon this Hinge, and indeed not without good Reason. For although this be an Inferiour degree of Evidence, and fuch as leaves an Abfolute Possibility that the thing may be otherwise, yet it secures a Man from all Fear of the contrary; and a Traveller may as little doubt of his way when lightned by the numerous Union of little Splendors in the Milky Way, as when he has the Broad Eye of Heaven for his Guide. For though every fingle Circumstance in this great heap of Inducements, has but the force of a Probability, and confequently all together can produce no more than that by a proper and direct efficacy; yes there is a new and secondary Force that arises from Reflection; and the E 2 ConConfederate Probabilities, weigh more in their Conjunction, than not only fome, but even all of them would do Singly. Indeed they fall little fhort of a strict Demonstration, it being hardly conceivable how there should be such a conflux of Arguments upon one side of the Contradiction, if the Truth were not there too.

And moreover there is one Advantage that a Moral Demonstration has above a Physical one, namely, that there can be no contrary Demonstration brought against it. 'Tis otherwise in the latter; as for instance, in that endless and unbounded Controversy concerning the Composition of a Continuum and the infinite Divisibility of Quantity, where there are plain Demonstrations (that is, such as by Men of Art and Subtilty cannot be difcern'd from such,) on both sides, which yet are Contradictory. But now, this a Moral Demonstration does not admit of, fince it cannot lay claim to that Name, till after the Probabilities of both fides have been Compared. and one Scale mightily outweighs the other. Whenever therefore there is this

this Evidence for any Man's Wickedness, I may safely censure him as Guilty. \* Thus, that the See of Rome is the Seat of

Antichrift, though this be not

evident up to the degree of Physical Demonstration, yet

See a foort, but very convincing Acccount of this matter in Dr. Burnet's Latin Theory; the Second Part, Pag. 126.

when I confider what the Notes and Marks of Antichrift are, how various in their Number, how confiderable in their Quality, and how exactly they all agree to a certain Order of Men in the World, and to none besides; together with all the variety of Concurrence in point of Synchronisms and the like; I suppose I might without any danger of Censoriousness or Uncharity, write Mystery upon the Triple Crown, and conclude him that wears it to be the Man of Sin. This would not be that Judging according to Appearance, which is opposed to Righteous Judgment. w atention in the site of the site of

As it is not, in the Third place, to fuspect Ill of a Person upon considerable figns and circumstances, that is, upon fuch as would determin my O2 pinion in any other Matter wholly indifferent, and where I have no Interest,

Passion,

Passion or Prejudice concern'd, to have it thus or otherwise. To pronounce Absolutely and Peremptorily in fuch a case, would indeed be a degree of Censoriousness beyond the allowance of either Charity or Prudence, because the Conclusion would then exceed the force of the Premises. which is ill in Logick, and worse in Morality; but a bare Suspicion is very Warrantable upon fuch grounds, and consistent with the highest Charity and Prudence of a Christian; for Suspicion is not Evil as Suspicion, being as such only a certain degree of Affent, which cannot be evil in its own Nature, but is either fo or otherwife, according as the grounds are upon which it proceeds. Indeed to be Sufpicious, we commonly take in an ill Sense, and reckon it among the Characters of an ill Man, not that we think Suspecting to be in it self unlawful, but because we suppose the Man whom we call Suspicious, more apt and forward to entertain ill Suspicions, than in the reason of the thing he ought to be. But if the grounds of my Suspicion be just and reasonable, such as considering Men use to be determined by in other matters

matters of acknowledged Indifferency, it will then be as lawful for me to Suspect as to Judge more absolutely upon grounds that are more clear and evident.

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There are (I observe) a certain sort of Men in the World who are not only careless and regardless of their Behaviour, not using that Caution and Circumfpection which they ought and eafily might for the prevention of ill Suspicions, but studiously order the course of their Conversation so as if they were fond of Jealousies, and laid a Trap for Centure pand defigned to decoy Men into an ill opinion of them; and then (which is the most surprizing thing of all, ) as foon asuthey have caught their Prey & and are thought and fooken amiss of, they cry out, the World is cenforious, and where's your Charity & But in the First place, are not thefe Men even with the World? Don't they Cenfure as much as they themselves are Censured & But to let that pass, how do they make good their Charge? Why, they fay they are innocent, they are not the Men the World has taken and repre**fented** E 4

fented them for. It may be so, but sure my Charity does not stand or sall with the Truth of your Guilt, the Question as to that being not whether you are really the Man I took you to be, but whether you have not given me just and reasonable grounds to think so. And if you have, 'tis not your Innocence that will condemn me of unjust Censure, any more than it will acquit you from the Crime of Scandak.

Sufficient but oftedisonly order th If therefore these great Pretenders to Charity and Candour, would have the ill-natured World leave off Cenfuring according to fuch Appearances, let them be more cateful, to abstain from all Appearances of Evil; for as long as Men put on Bears Skins, the Dogs will Bark, and to be angry, with them if they do, is as abfurd as to give them the Occasion. For what if you walk not in the Counsel of the Ungodly? yet if you stand in the way of Sinners, and fit in the Seat of the Scornful, if you have all the Symptoms and Appearances of an ill Man, I have good grounds to suspect you as such, and a well-grounded Suspicion is always according to Charity.

Charity. Thus if a Man who for many Years past, has been vehemently suspected to be of a different Religion from that which he openly Professes. should at length when the warm influence of a like-perswaded Princes Favour, invites him to come abroad and dismantle his Secrecies, and at such a period of this Life too, when 'tis to be presumed that the vibration of his Judgment has been long fince over, and fetled in the point of its gravity, and that he had no new Changes to make, if I say he should then appear to be what the World took him for long before, I hope 'tis a pardonable Cenfure, if I think he has been a Difsembling Hypocrite all along, and that he would have continued to to the last, if Opportunity and Countenance had not put an end to his Dissimulaare too many that do lost the poit

To think ill of a Man upon such grounds and appearances as these, is to think rationally, and how can be transgress, that duly follows the conduct of his Reason? The Wise Son of Strach allows greater Liberty, when he tells us, that a Man's Attire, Excess of Laugh-

Luke 12.

ter and Gait, shew what he is; that is, afford us just Measures whereby to judge of him, to judge him to be none of the Wisest. And our Saviour reproves the Jews for not discerning the face of the Times. And if a Man may judge of the Times, then why not of those that live in them, and upon whose account alone it is that one Time is distinguished from another in relation to good or evil? In all this therefore we sin not, nor charge our Neighbour soolishly. But this we do,

First, Whenever we take up an ill Opinion of a Man rashly and studdenly, and at first dash prick him down for a Knave, without so much as giving our selves the trouble of inquiring into the merits of the cause; there are too many that do so, that let their Thoughts and Tongues too run before their Wit; that throw out their Censures at random, and speak Evil ex tempore, without considering of whom they talk, or what, or why: Men that are for running down every one that comes in their way, and are for passing Sentence immediately without

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any trial or examination, nay without fo much as the formality of asking Guilty or not Guilty? This is certainly a very prepofterous headlong method against all sense and good breeding as well as Charity. Tis like the Jews that were all for Crucifying the Lord of Life before they had heard him. But this is fuch a gross piece of Injuflice as fufficiently condemns it felf; all therefore that I shall further fay to the Men of this Practice is, that he who makes hast to Censure, can no more be Innocent, than he that makes haft to be Rich ; and that if we ought to confider before we venture to Commend, (as Wise Men say we ought,) then much more ought we before we Condemn. I as Il was modify my

Secondly, When though we do confider, and make some enquiry into the cause, and withal find some ground and soundation for an ill Judgment, yet we conclude beyond the sorce of the Premises, and give a Peremptory Sentence, where there are grounds for no higher an Assent, than Opinion or Suspicion. This is a certain sign that we are not determined by the Moments

ments of Truth, by the strength of Reason and Argument, but by some other By-Confideration and partial Inducement. For were our Judgments guided and determined by the fole Appearances of Truth, 'tis impossible that our Assent should be stronger than the Evidence that causes it. For the Understanding of it self, can be determined no farther than as the Object appears to be either true or false; if it be, all that overplus of Judgment that exceeds the degrees of Evidence, must be produced by some other cause, the Evidence alone could cause no more than what was proportionable to it. There is indeed a mixture in all fuch Judgments, and the Will has a part in them as well as the Underflanding. He therefore that concludes worse of another than in Appearance he has reason to do, must be suppofed in some measure willing to do so. that is, in other Words, to be under fome Malice or Prejudice-against him; and he that judges upon such Principles, can never judge Righteous Judgment, and Committee and the second on

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Thirdly, This we do when we conceive an ill Apprehension of a Person from one or two fingle instances of his Life, without confidering the general tenour of his Conversation. This is a very unjust way of proceeding, and contrary to all Human and Divine Meafores. The main current of a Man's Life is to be regarded, and if this maintain a regular Course, 'tis not here and there a little straggling Rivulet that should spoil the Character. For if the Denomination ought always to be taken from the major part, certainly much more fo when it lies on the most favourable side. To ballance therefore one fingle wandring Star against a whole Constellation of regular actions, is a very ill fort of unrighteous Judgment, and fuch as the best of Men could never be able to abide, who must needs all be cast in such a Court as this. Such a way of Judging therefore, is not to be indured, especially confidering that the Supream Judge of all does not judge us at this rate, but often proceeds by a contrary measure, and fuffers one fingle Vertue to cover a multitude of Sins. A side side is the asset

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Fourthly and Lastly, To give one general Measure for all; this we do whenever our ill Opinion of a Man is built upon such poor and slight Appearances, as would not be fufficient to gain our Affent in any other indifferent matter, wherein we are altogether dif-interessed which way the Scale turns, or prevail with us to think the fame concerning another Person. This is a fure Sign that Prejudice holds the Ballance, ('tis held fo uneven,) and that we judge what we would willingly have. And this is more particularly that judging according to Appearance, which our Lord here condemns. For thus flood the case, our Saviour had perform'd a Cure upon the Sabbath day, among those who were Superstitious Observers of it; now this carried some Appearance of its Violation: whereupon the Tews tax him with Prophaning that holy Rest, not at all reflecting either upon Mofes's feeming in confiftency, in appointing such a trottblesome work as Circumcision to be done on that day, as often as it happened to be the Eighth, or upon themselves for then administring it. But the vide I reason

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reason was plain, they were soundly prejudiced against Christ, but not against Moses or themselves. Well therefore might our Lord fay, if a Man on the Sabbath day receive Circumcision, that the Lam of Moses should not be broken. are ye angry at me because I have made a Man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Will you mound upon that day, and shall not I heal? Judge not according to Appearance, (Kar O div. according to every flight Superficial Appearance, fuch as you your felves would not fubmit to in another case,) but judge Righteous Judgment. The great Reasonableness and Necessity of which Precept comes now in the last place to be confidered by builded to sitionin

Its Equity, relies, mainly upon this double ground, the ill Principle that fuch superficial Judging proceeds from, and the ill Consequences it leads to.

First, It proceeds from an ill Principle; it argues First, that we are conscious of some inward Baseness in our selves, something that is very low and sordid, which makes us so prone and easy to suspect the same in others; as

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that is Drunk himself, fancies every one else to be so that he meets. It argues Secondly, that we thirst after Eminency, and yet despair of attaining it any other way, than by levelling those about us ; which makes us so ready and willing to discover Spots in the Moon, and Flaws in the most Solid and Maffy Vertue. It argues Thirdly a Mind very disaffected to our Neighbour, to Human Nature indeed, and as much alienated from the true Spirit of Love and Goodness. That we are full of Envy, Pride, Malice and Prejudice, that we love to dwell upon Sores and Deformities, that we take a fecret pleasure in the Follies and Infirmities of Mankind, and grieve at that whereat the Angels rejoyce, namely, the wife Behaviour, and good order of Men, all which is Inhuman and Diabolical, fit only for Devils and Evil Spirits, but altogether contrary to theunselfish universalized nature of God, who rejoyced when he law all things good and perfect; and to Charity, whose Character St. Paul tells us, is, 1 Cor. 13. that it rejoices not in Iniquity. 1 2019

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But Secondly, the Consequences of this fort of Judging are as bad as the Principle; for 1st, He that proceeds to Judgment upon every little Appearance, must needs be often mistaken, and give Sentence with an Erring Key, and so often incur that Woe pronounced by the Prophet against all fuch as call Evil Good, and Good E- IG. 5. 20. vil; because Falshood often wears the guise of Truth, and things seem otherwife than they are. Thus the Affability and free Conversation of our Saviour, which was really the effect of his great Humility and condescending Goodness, and of his earnest defire to benefit Mankind, was hardly Cenfured by the Maligning Jews, and mifconstrued as a piece of Levity and Dissoluteness; Behold, Say they, a Man Mat. 11.19. Gluttonous, and a Wine bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners: By this means we shall mis-rate both Persons and Things, and often deny those our good word, who it may be, if better known, deserve even our Reverence and Admiration. By this means private Grudges will be entertain'd, and open Quarrels will be broach'd, Mens Affections

Affections will be groundlefly and unaccountably estranged from one another, the Bands of Friendship will be untyed, and Men will be jealous and afraid of their dearest well-wishers; good Constitutions will suffer for Perfonal Miscarriages, good Churches for unworthy Members, good Religions for ill Professors, good Counsels and good Causes for their ill Success; and lastly, that good Reputation which all Men exceedingly value, and which some Men have a fair Right to, and Prov. 22.4. Which the Wiself of Men prefers before great Riches, will be wounded by the Roving Shot of every Goffiping Tongue.

To which I may add in the last place, that when Men have once accustomed themselves to hard Censures, upon small Appearances, they will be apt to inlarge their Court of Judicature, and from Censuring the Actions of Men, proceed to Question and Condemn the Dispensations of Providence, and say with the Impious House of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal.

It concerns us all therefore to use that Faculty with great Discretion, upon the right or wrong use of which so much depends; to judge with Caution, and Circumspection, and Mercy here, lest we find Judgment without Mercy hereaster.

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## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Religious Singularity.

Rom. 12. 2.
Be not Conformed to this World.

NE of the greatest Supporters of Absurdity in Speculation, and of Immorality in Practice, is Authority; that of Doctrin in the former, and that of Example in the latter. It misguides and perverts the whole Man, puts a false Bias upon the whole motion of the Soul, imposes both upon our Understandings and upon our Wills, corrupts both

both our Sentiments and our Practices, and leads us out of the way both of Truth and of Vertue. But it has a greater and more prevailing influence upon our Actions than upon our Sentiments, and our Lives suffer more by it than our Opinions. For besides, that there are more Examples of ill Living than of ill Thinking, and a well-moralized Conversation, is a greater Rarity, than an Orthodox Head, there being not fuch Temptations and Occasions to Error as there are to Vice; there is also this further difference, that in our Opinions we more usually follow those Authorities which stand off at a great distance from us, and which Antiquity by I know not what Artifice, recommends to us as Sacred and Venerable. in our Actions we take a quite contrary measure, and are rather apt to conform our selves to the Genius and Mode of the Age we live in, which being present, shines upon us with a direct and perpendicular Ray, and more strongly influences and provokes our Imitation and Compliance. L'tis fit it mould l

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And truly this is the greatest Mischief that is derived upon the Minds of Men from Authority, and the chiefest Head of Complaint that lies against it; were it only a Stop to the advancement of Learning, or a Milleader of our Understandings in Speculative Inquiries; were it only a Bar to Notional Improvements, or a Betrayer of our Orthodoxy, it might be thought to have done Pennance enough under the Chastisement of a Satyr or Declamation. For the greatest stock of Knowledge which upon the best advantages we can attain to, is so inconsiderable, that 'tis hardly worth while to be very angry and fall out with what stands in our way, and hinders our little Progress. There is no great Mischief done 5 tis like spoiling what was spoil'd before, and which otherwise would come to little. But fince 'ris the great Enemy to all Righteousness, as well as to all Truth, fince it debauches our Morals as well as our Understandings, and spoils the Christian as well as the Philosopher, 'tis fit it should be arraigned before an higher Court, and be Condemned by the Cenfure of an Apostle. And

## feveral Divine Subjects.

And so it is, and that upon great and weighty Reasons, in the Words of the Text, Be not Conform'd to this World.

In the Words, we may confider a Supposition and a Caution. The Supposition is two-fold.

First, That the general course of the World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side.

Secondly, That we are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the course and way of the World.

Lastly, the Cantion is against this Inclination, that we should not be Conformed to the modes and usages of this World; which I shall first state as to its Measures and Limits, and then fuffify as to its Equity and Reasonableness; and so conclude with some Practical Remarks upon the whole.

And in the First place, 'tis here supposed, that the general course of the F 4 World World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side. This, though at first fight it looks like a Common Place, a matter of frequent, obvious and familiar Confideration, is yet a thing that is not often thoroughly considered, and there are but few that have a true, lively, and affectionate Sense of it. 'Tis not easy for those that are good themselves, to imagin how bad others are, and how much Wickedness there is in the World; and as for evil Men, they don't use to trouble their Heads with fuch ferious Reflections: So that neither of them are like to have a just sense and resentment of this matter.

The World we commonly compare to a Theatre, and truly for the number of Actors, and the variety of Action, it is the most Pompous and Magnisscent of any; but the Parts that are acted upon it, are for the most very Tragical, and its Scenes full of Horrour and Confusion. For not to mention unjust and causless Wars, Massacres, Rebellions and Murthers, which like Earthquakes make the frame of Nature to tremble, and threaten the fall of the Stage

Stage upon which they are Acted; who can reckon up the open Oppreffions, and the secret Frauds, the Violences and the Deceits, the Extortions and the Over-reachings, with all the Arts of Falshood and Subtilty which are every where and every day made use of among Men, to disposses one another of their Rights and Fortunes? And who is there that can imagine what private Infinuations, what fly Contrivances, what spiteful Whisperings, what treacherous Arts there are daily used even among those that profess Dearness and Kindness to one another, to undermine one anothers Interests, and blast one anothers Honours and Reputations? I need not go to the Courts of Princes for this, those Schools and Nurseries of Immorality, for there is scarce any Society of Men free from it. To this, if I should add the unnatural Fewds of Relations, the ungrateful Returns of obliged Persons, the Treacheries of the Marriage-Bed, the Falmesses of Friends, the ill offices of Neighbours, and the intolerable Practices of Revenge, not only upon pretences of Honour among the Duellifts, but as they are generally carried on by

by the power and Interest of great Men, by the corrupt and vexatious methods of the Law, and by the common malice of the World; if I say I should add this and a thousand times more that might be said, what a Picture should I draw of Mankind, and what intelligent Spirit is there that would not be asraid, (if such an account should be given him beforehand,) to be born into, or to live in such a World as this?

But thus it was immediately upon the beginning of things, thus it has been in all Ages, and thus it will be till the Arch-Angel's Trump shall at once awaken us from the sleep of Death, and from the fleep of Sin, and Time it felf shall be no more. For no sooner had God finished his Creation, and declared all things good in it, and began to take a Complacency in the works of his Hands, but through Envy of the Devil, Sin came into the World, and untuned the proportions of its new fet Harmony; and being once planted in the Earth, it liked the Soil, and increased and multiplied by the care and industry of the Devil, as fast

as Mankind could by the Benediction of God. Infomuch that God who not long before was represented by Moses as Creating Man upon the most confiderate Paule of Counsel and Deliberation, is now brought in, repenting that ever he had made him. And Gen. 6.6. accordingly, he first shortens his Days, and that expedient failing, he proceeds to a severer Judgment, and issues forth a Sentence to destroy him from the Ver. 5. face of the Earth. For God fam that the Wickedness of Man was great, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was evil continually. And again the Text fays, that God look'd upon the Earth, and behold it was Corrupt, for all Flesh had Corrupted his way upon Ver. 12. the Earth.

And truly 'tis incredible almost to think to what a pitch of Villany and Wickedness the World was then arrived in so short a time; the World then like some of our Modern Sinners, was young in Years and old in Debauchery; it lookt as if the Devil being newly thrown out of Heaven, were in the very height of his Malice and Resentment, and to retrieve again

the lost Field, endeavoured to increase his Numbers, to double his Ranks, by making Men as very Devils as himself. For Vice seem'd to reign Absolute and Uncontroll'd, and to have taken full Possession of the whole Earth, so that excepting only Four Persons, Abel, Seth, Enos, and Enoch, we read not of one good Man from Adam to Noah; so extreamly wicked and debauched was the World at that time, and so highly deserving of that Emphatical Character which the Aposses of it, calling it Koomis, double of the World of the Ungodly: As if it were a state directly op-

y: As if it were a state directly opposite to that of the blessed Millennium, to that new Heaven and new Earth, wherein as the same Apostle tells us, dwelleth Righteonsness.

But this you'll say, was at a time when God had not given any express Directory for the Manners of Men, who were then left to the sole guidance of their natural light, which at best is but a doubtful Twilight, and is withall apt to be clouded and corrupted by ill Customs and Practices, and in a little time to be quite extinguished with

the Damps of Vice and Debauchery.

Let us see therefore how it fared with the course of the World after the giving of the Law, when God had trim'd the dim Lamp of natural Conscience, when Revelation had illustrated the obscure Text of Reason, and the Moral, like the Natural World, was governed by a greater as well as by a leffer Light. Now fure one would expect that Men should walk as Children of the Day, and that works of Darkness should disappear like Mists before the Rifing Sun. And questionless, it must be acknowledged that the State of the Moral World was confiderably better'd by this new accession of Light, and that there was less Vice and more Goodness among those who enjoy'd it; the Peculiar People of God, than among the rude Heathen, who had no knowledge of his Laws. For to what purpose should God visit them with this his Day-spring from on high, and give Light to them that fate in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death. but only that he might the better guide their Feet into the way of Peace?

In comparison therefore of the Heathen World, this was a good state of things; but yet Vice had still the up-

per hand, and confidering the vast difproportion between the Numbers of good and bad Men, the World might Still be called Kasuds dospar, the World of the Ungodly. For not to mention the particular Vices of that perverse and untractable People the Jews, their Superstition, their Idolatry, their Infidelity, their Rebelliousness, their Lust and Luxury, their Uncharity, their Covetousness and the like, the Scripture feems to speak of that state and age of the World in general, as if 'twere quite overgrown with Wickedness, and as if Vertue were a Stranger among the Dwellings of Men. Thus the Palmift, Help me, Lord, for there is not one Godly Man left, the Faithful are minished from among the Children of Men. And again, The Lord lookt down from Heaven upon the Children of Men to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God. And what was the refult of this Scrutiny? Why, they are all gon out of the way, they are altagether become abominable, there is none that doth good.

Pfal. 12.

Pfal. 14.

good, no not one. And again says the Psalmist, speaking of the City of Jerusalem, I have spied Unrighteousness and Strife in the City, Day and Night they go about within the Walls thereof, Mischief also and Sorrow are in the midst of of it; Wickedness is therein, Deceit and Psal. 55. Guile go not out of their Streets. And again more largely, All the Earth is full Psal. 74. of Darkness and Gruel Habitations. And again lastly, to add no more, They will not be Learned nor Understand, all the Foundations of the Earth are out of Psal. 82. Course.

Thus miserably deformed was the face of things in this state and period of the World: Nor were only the Morals of Men universally Corrupt, but they had debauched and corrupted their very Principles too, and defaced the Map that was to guide and direct them, as well as lost their Way. They had almost put out the light of Revelation as well as that of Natural Reafon, fo that by that time our Saviour appeared in the World, what by ill Glosses and worse Practices, the People of God had almost reduced themselves again to the state of Darkness and and shadow of Death, and defaced the Characters of the Mosaic Table, as much as their Foresathers had done those of the Law of Nature.

But then again, perhaps it will be faid, that this was at a time when God had not made any clear and express Revelation of Heaven or Hell; and therefore though Men had a written Law to walk by, yet it being supported by no other Sanctions than of Temporal Rewards and Punishments, they wanted a sufficient Counterpoise against the violence of Temptations; and then no wonder that Wickedness should so universally prevail, when the Allurements to Vice were strong, and the ingagements to Duty but weak and unconstraining. But when once Obedience comes to be inforced by better Promises and by Severer Threatnings, this certainly will introduce a new way of Living; Men will confider more, and live better, and will never be so mad and filly as to spend a few days in Wickedness and Folly, and then in a moment go down to the Grave. and be Damned for ever.

Let us see therefore how 'tis with the Moral World under the Revelation of the Great Mystery of Godlines, and now Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; this I think fully answers the Objection: Now therefore certainly one would expect at least a state of Millennial Happiness, that Men should be, and live like Angels, that we should see the Tabernacle of God come down and abide among Men, with a new Heaven and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. But alas, the Mystery of Iniquity began to work affoon as the Mystery of Godliness; and altho' the Primitive Christians were for a while kept bright and shining in the Furnace of Persecution, yet no sooner was the heat of their Affliction over. but their Zeal cool'd with it, and they left their first Love. For then it was that the great Dragon being wroth that the Woman was delivered of a Manchild, that Constantine the Great was Converted by the Church to the Christian Faith, thought to overwhelm her by casting out of his Mouth that mighty Flood of Arianism. And altho' Rev. 12.

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the Earth helped the Woman, by opening her Mouth, and swallowing up the Flood, which was done when the First Council of Nice declared against that Pestilent and Prevailing Heresy; yet 'twas not long before the same Dragon cast forth two other mighty Floods out of his Mouth, and the Christian World suffered almost an inundation by the breaking in of Popery and Mahumetism.

We have indeed by the Bleffing of God, and the Zealous Endeavours of good Men, dried up one of those great Floods from a good part of the Christian World, and restored the Doctrin of the Gospel to its Primitive Purity and Simplicity. But has the Reformation gon on so prosperously in our Manners, as it has in our Faith? Are we as Good as we are Orthodox? I doubt not; for if we look abroad into the World, how little true Goodness and Vertue shall we find in it! How rare is it to meet with a Man that lives up within some tolerable measure to the Obligations of his Profession! And how much more rare is it to fee one that's truly Serious and Confiderate.

rate, Circumspect and Recollected, that considers thoroughly and effectually the End of his coming into the World, the shortness and uncertainty of his stay in it, and what shall become of him when he is to go out of it; and accordingly lives under a constant and lively fense of God and of his Du-ty to him, walks with him, and gives up himself wholly to him, makes Religion and the care of his Soul the main business and concern of his Life; works with all his Might while 'tis Day, and is utterly resolved whatever it costs him, to mind and secure the One thing necessary! This one would think were no more than what common Sense would prompt any Man to, that would allow himself to think but one Minute in a Year; and yet how few fuch Men shall we find in the World! Do we not rather see Men drink down Iniquity like Water, and commit Sin with Greediness? Do not the generality of Men live as if they were refolved to Sin as much as they could in a little time, and thought it not only safe, but necessary to do ill? Do they not live as if they were to be nothing after this Life, or as if they

were to be faved by their Vices rather than by their Vertues; or lastly, as if they thought Hell a better Place than Heaven, and were in love with Damnation and Everlasting Burnings?

But to come a little nearer to our felves, does not the present Age abound with a fort of Men who are Crafty and Deligning, False and Treacherous, Rotten and Hypocritical; Men that feem to have their Eye fixed upon, and terminated with the Horizon of this World, that make Gain their Godliness, and Interest their Meafure, that will betray the Church for Preferment, sell their Religion and their Souls for Mony, that will depart from the way of Truth for the Wages of Unrighteousness, and be Damned hereafter to be Rich and Great here? Never was there more Religion pretended than now, and never less in truth and reality; never more noise about it, and never a less hearty concern for it. What Straining about the Knat of a Ceremony, with those who can in the mean while Swallow down whole Camels of profitable Abominanations!

nations! This we may talk of, and lament, but we can't help it. 'Twill be ever so with the general course of the World; Vice will always have the Cry of her fide, and we are told, that in the latter days Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold. And all this we may learn from the final issue and event of things; we may measure the state of this World, from the final distribution of things in the next. Our Saviour tells us, that broad is the Way that leads to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. And, that strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leads to Life, and few Mat. 7. 13. there be that find it.

And this we shall the less wonder at, if we consider the universal pravity and corruptness of Human Nature, the Multitude of Temptations we are all exposed to, and the peculiar unhappy circumstances of Living that many Men are ingaged in: To which if we add the great Strength, Cunning and Malice of the Invisible Powers, that the same Envy of the Devil that first brought Sin into the World, is still concerned to uphold and increase it;

that there are two different Interests carrying on, that there is a Kingdom of Darkness as well as a Kingdom of Light, and a Mystery of Iniquity, as well as a Mystery of Godliness; we can't think any other, but that the course of the World must needs be very bad. And the wonder will fall yet lower, if we further consider how prone we are to confirm and strengthen an ill Custom by our Imitation and Compliance; which leads me to the Second thing supposed, that we are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the Course and Way of the World.

Now this we are apt to do for one of these Two Reasons; either because we think the generality has the Right of its side, and that what most Men do, is sit to be done. Or if we do think they are in the wrong, and do amiss, yet we are loath to venture the Charge of Singularity, and withal fancy that there is something of safety and excuse in Numbers and Multitudes.

And First, we are apt to think, that the generality has the Right of its fide, and that what most Men do, is fit to be done. There is nothing that carries fo much Authority with it, as the Example of a Multitude; and though every Man is ready to imagin himself Wifer than any one of these singly. vet when he looks upon them as a Body of Men, there is fomething awful and commanding in it; the Man blushes to himself, as we are apt to do when we come into an Affembly in Publick, though made up of Men, every one of which we think inferior to our felves; but their Numbers. and Union give them another Air and Appearance, and the Voice of the People becomes to us now as the Voice. of God.

Tis in Practice as in Opinion, what the most hold, we take to be True, and so what the most do we take to be Good. This is the only Rule some People have to go by, and it the Measure that all Popular Spirits do go by, and the Wisest can hardly refrain it; for we can hardly think it likely, that such an United and Complicated G 4 Wissom

Wisdom should be mistaken either in the one or the other. Every Man is apt to reason with himself in the conduct of his Manners, as Luther did in the business of the Reformation, Art thou the only Wife Man? and, can for many Worlds err? What? shall we oppose our selves against the Practice of Mankind, set up for Reformers, row against so great a Stream, and live against the World ? Can there be any ill in that which so many do, which is passed into a Custom and a Law, which is practifed all the World over? Ought we not rather to fufpect our own Judgments, and conclude, that that must needs be the right Point, where fo many Lines meet, and that the right Way where we find so many Passengers? This is the common and the natural Logick of most Men, and by this Measure we proceed both in Opinion and in Practice, but especially in Practice. And this is one cause of our aptness to Conform to the Course and Way of the World. But there is also another. It was suit may a likely a lead related to the responsibility

For Secondly, if we do think that the Generality is in the wrong, and does amis, yet we are loth to venture the charge of Singularity, and withal fancy that there is something of safety and excuse in Numbers and Multitudes. And first, as to the Charge of Singularity, 'tis a dreadful and a frightful Word, and there are but few that have the Courage and the Confidence to stand up against and face the Imputation. We either think the World Wifer than our felves, or would willingly be thought to do fo, fince this has a shew of Modesty and good Manners, and the contrary feems to carry in it an intolerable degree of Pride and Self-arrogancy. But now to be Singular in any of our Actions, is interpretatively and in effect, to prefer our own Sense and Judgment, before that of the World, at least as far as concerns the particular case then before us. For fince our Actions are governed by our present Sentiments, if we do otherwise than the World does, tis plain that we think otherwise too, and that we fet a higher value upon those private Thoughts of ours, than upon

upon the publick Sense and Judgment of the World, which is a very odious and ingrateful thing to own and publifh. For we stand in awe of our Fellow Creatures more than we do of our own Consciences, especially when combined and confederated together in great Numbers and Companies, and cannot chuse but regard and revere their Censures and Animadversions. And this makes us willing rather to err with the Multitude, and be Fools for Company, though we act all the while against the clear Light of our own Minds, than incur the great Cenfure, the heavy Anathema of Singularity.

And besides, we think there is no necessity neither of running that risque, for we reckon our selves secure enough without it, and are apt to slatter our selves into a fancy that there is something of Sasety and Excuse in Numbers and Multitudes: Though we know we are in the ways of Sin, yet we comfort and incourage our selves to go on in them, by thinking how much they are frequented, like Travellers wandring in the Dark, who though they

they know they are out of their way. vet solace themselves in their Number and Company. This is very natural and ordinary for Men to do in all cafes, in the case of Sin and Error as well as in others; and therefore the Pfalme fpeaking of the gathering together of the Froward, and of the Infurrection of Wicked Doers, (which supposes them dany and in Companies) immediately adds, They incourage Pfal. 64. themselves in Mischief. This is a very usual but vain confidence; for however the Multitude of Offenders may be a Security against an Earthly Power, yet God regards Numbers no more than Persons, and though hand joyn in Prov. 11. hand, the Wicked hall not go unpunish- 21. ed.

These are the Grounds and Principles upon which we are inclined to be Conformable to the general Course of the World. But 'tis high time now to shew why we should not be so; and this leads me to consider lastly, the Caution it self, that we should not be Conformable to the World: But before I come to justifie this Caution, as to its Equity end Reasona-

Reasonableness, I must premise something concerning its Limits and Measures.

And First, This Caution is not so rigorously to be understood, as if we were not to yield some compliance and conformity with the Humours and Dispositions of those with whom we Converse; for this is mecessary part of Homilitical Vertue, and contributes very much to the fweetning and indearing of Society, and is therefore Good and Commendable, as well as Innocent and Lawful. 'Tis indeed that very thing which we call Good-nature, when a Man bends and warps a little from his own natural Posture, to meet and strike in with the inclination of his Companions. And the contrary is fo far from being a Vertue, that 'tis a culpable stiffness and obstinacy of Mind; and we may take this for a rule, that Religion is ever confiftent with Civility and good Manners, as indeed it is with whatever really conduces to the Comfort and Happiness of Human Life. We are only to take care that our Compliance prove not a Snare to us, an occasion of falling into Sin :

Sin; that we do not offend God, out of Civility towards Men. In all other cases, we would do well to consider and follow that of the Apostle, I am 1Cor.9.22. made all things to all Men: And again, I please all Men in all things.

Neither again Secondly, is this Caution to be fo rigorously understood, as if we were forbidden to conform to the several indifferent Modes of Ages or of Countries, either as to Customs or Ceremonies, whether Religious or Civil, or Habits, or manner of Address, or way of Diet, or the like. For however these may not posfibly be ordered according to the best convenience or measure of Discretion. yet 'tis according to the publick Wifdom of the Place and Nation, (for the Wisdom of a Nation is seen as much in their Customs as in their Proverbs,) and therefore the matter of them being supposed indifferent, 'tis not civil or modest to contradict them. And there is this further to be confidered, that besides the pride and rudeness of such an opposition, all the advantage or convenience a Man can get by it, will not compensate for the Odium

Odium and Cenfure of Affectation and Singularity. And accordingly we find, that the Wifest of Men in all Ages have ever thought it Prudence to conform to the Innocent, though otherwife not fo convenient Customs of the Age and Place wherein they lived. And 'tis observed concerning our Bleffed Saviour himfelf, who was the Wifdom of the Eternal Father, that when he condescended to put on Flesh, and live among Men, he condescended yet further, and complied with all the received Customs and manners of the Jewish Nation. And indeed he became in all things like unto his Brethren, Sin only excepted; Innocence was his only Singularity.

And this, in one Word, is our meafure; we may and ought to be conformable as far as the bounds of Innocence; usque ad Aras is the measure of our civil Conversation, as well as of our Friendship and dearer Intimacies: For why should we shew so much disrespect to our Company, as to quit the Road they have taken, if we may safely travail in it? The Conformity therefore which we are here cautioned against, against, is that of Imitating the general Practice of the World, as to Actions, not of a Civil but of a Moral Nature: We must not be Conform'd to the general Morals of this World; the Reason and Equity of which Caution I come now to justify.

And the first Reason why we must not be Conform'd to this World, is because this is not such a World as we may fafely imitate, 'tis not a World for us to be Conformed to; it never was fo even in the Best and Purest times, much less is it now, in these last and worst days. 'Tis not safe following the Multitude at any time, much less now; nor in any thing, but least of all in the ordering our Life and Conversation. 'Tis a very ill Guide in matters of Opinion, but much worse in matters of Practice; for the World is a meer Theatre of Folly, a Stage of Vice and Debauchery, one great Aceldama of Blood and Cruelty, and to use the Description of St. John, the John 5.19. whole World lieth in Wickedness; the Words are Emphatical, & τώ πονηρώ xerrai, it has not only fallen into the Gulph of Sin, but it lies there contentedly

flightly dipt or stained with the Waters of Impurity, but it lies as it were Mosted round, or rather all over drench'd and soak'd in them, like the Earth in the Universal Deluge: But this I need persue no surther, having already made it a distinct Member of my Discourse.

Again, Secondly, another Reason why we must not be Conformed to this World, is because by so doing, we shall confirm and strengthen the cause of Wickedness, and give it Settlement, Succession and Perpetuity: For we shall countenance and imbolden those whom we imitate, and cause others to imitate us, and they again will be a President to others, and so on, till Vice pretend to the Right of Custom and Prescription, and Iniquity be established by a Law. This is one great Reafon why the World is so bad now, and tis the best expedient the Devil has to make it yet worse; for by this the Vices of the former Ages descend upon the future, Sin becomes Hereditary, Children transcribe their vicious Parents, and actual, like Original Sin.

is intailed upon Posterity. Fill ye up Mat. 23. the Measure of your Fathers, said our Saviour by way of Prophecy to the Jews, implying that they would do so; for our Lord very well knew the Temper of those to whom he said it; and I question not but that most of the wickedness of that Nation was owing to this, that they were so generally possessed with this Superstitious Humour of Conformity, and were resolved to do as their Fore-sathers had done before them.

Again Thirdly, another Reason why we Christians must not Conform to this World, is because both the Precepts and the Rewards of our Religion require a very different method of Life from what is ordinarily practifed; the Precepts are strict and severe, and the Rewards high and noble, fuch indeed as cannot be conceived for their greatness, and they both call for a very excellent and extraordinary way of Conversation; for after the common way of Living, we shall neither obtain the one, nor fulfil the other. Indeed our Religion obliges us to great Strictness and Singularity, and

a Christian cannot be like himself, if he be like other Men. To be a Christian indeed, is to be a New Creature, to be New in Nature, and New in Life and Conversation; he must not be like his former self, much less like the rest of the World. The Argument is the Apostle's, Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day; that is, Christians, Professors of an holy and excellent Religion, whose Precepts are excellently Good, and whose Promises are excellently Great.

Thef. 5. And what then? Therefore let us not 5,6. Sleep as do others, but let us Watch and

be Sober.

Again Fourthly and Lastly, we Christians have one more peculiar Reason not to be Conformed to this World; we have renounced it in our Baptism, with all its Pomps and Vanities: By which are meant, not only the Heathen Games and Spectacles, their vain Shews, and loose Festivities, their lewd Bacchanals and Saturnals, which we renounce Absolutely, and the Wealth and Glory and Grandeur even of the Christian world, as often as they prove inconsistent with the ends of our Ho-

ly Institution; but also the promiscuous Company, the general Practices, and the popular Examples of this World, which are generally so very corrupt and wicked, that we renounce them not upon supposition, as in the other instance, but at a venture. The very first step to a Christian Life, is to dye to the World, and to its general Usages and Customs; and if we will sollow Christ, we must forsake the Multitudes, and ascend up to the Mount of Solitude and Holy Separation.

And that we may be the better incouraged to undertake this Religious Singularity, let us to the Reason of the thing, add two very remarkable Scripture Examples: The First that invites our Consideration, is that of Lot, who happened to live in a City fo prodigioufly wicked, and beyond all Meafure or Example Debauched, that though a very Populous Place, it could not afford so much as Ten good Men, they were fo univerfally feiz'd with the Pest and Contagion of Vice. And yet this good Man, though he breath'd in so corrupt an Air, was not at all H 2 infected

infected with it; the health and clean-ness of his Soul, like that of Socrates's Body, was too strong for the Contagion, and preserved him from the Malignity of a Plague that was more infectuous and more mortal too, than that of Athens. Indeed the filthy Conversation of that wicked Place, disturb'd his Quiet, but it could not fully his Innocence; it vex'd his Righteons

2 Pet. 2. 8. Soul, as the Text fays, but it could not Debauch it. He dwelt like the Church

Rev. 2. 13. of Pergamos, where Satan's Seat was, in the very Metropolis, the Imperial City of the Devil's Kingdom; but he Convers'd there like an Angel of Light among Fiends and evil Spirits. He was furrounded with the works of Darkness, but he had no Fellowship with them; his Company was Devilish, but his Conversation was Angelical; though he could not make them better, yet they could not make him worfe; he lived with them, but he lived against them.

> This indeed was great and extraordinary; but there is an Example of Religious Singularity beyond this, and that is in Noah, who lived in a World

that

that was as corrupt, and more than the other's City; the whole World then was but one Greater Sodom, nay it was much worse than that Seat of Wickedness. Sodom indeed was so given up to Debauchery, that it could not yield Ten Righteous Persons, but the whole World in Noah's time, could not afford so much as Two; he himself was the only good Man then in the World, as may reasonably be concluded from that Reason expressed by God, why he excepted him from the general Deluge, For thee have I Seen Righteous be- Gen. 7. 1. fore me in this Generation. Now 'tis impossible to imagin that Vice should ever be more in mode and fashion than it was then, when as the Text fays, all Flesh had Corrupted his way upon the Earth, and the whole Earth it felf was fill'd with Violence. And yet in this allover-wicked World, Noah maintained his Innocence and his Integrity, thin'd forth as a Light in the midst of this Crooked and Perverse Generation, and was not only a Doer, but a Preacher 2 Pet. 2. 5. of Righteousness. In other Ages of the World, though never fo Corrupt, Religion and Vertue has had fome Party, and the Singularity of Living H 3 well, TO Y

well, is shared and divided among several, and one is a Countenance and Incouragement to another; but here poor single Noah was fain to Live, as Athanasius was to Dispute, against the World, and the whole Singularity lodged and center'd in his single Person, which puts it beyond all Example or Parallel.

And thus have I gone through the feveral Stages of my Undertaking; I shall now make one or two brief Reflections upon the whole, and conclude.

In relation therefore to the First Supposition, it may be inferred, That the Multitude is no safe Guide, and that the Measures of Right and Wrong are not always to be concluded from the consent of Majority; for you see here, that Vice has by much the Majority of its side; and yet 'tis Vice still.

From the Second, it may be inferr'd, That those who have already a Majority for their way, ought not to think their Cause any whit the better

for having new Profelytes every day brought over to them, and because Men flock to their Standard from every Quarter. For, as it has been difcourfed, this is no more than what is to be expected from the ordinary course of things. Men are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the course and way of the World. Those therefore that value themselves or their Cause the better for this, seem not to understand the World, but to be meer Strangers to the Inclinations of Human Nature; for did they confider that, they would quickly perceive, that this does not reflect any Credit upon their Caufe, but rather upbraids the levity and weakness of Mankind, and is no argument that they themselves are Wife; but only that other Men are Fools M & Milw vions en

Lastly, from the Caution it self, we may justly infer, that the Censure of Precisence and Singularity which the Men of this World commonly charge upon good Men, and the Hatred and spite wherewith they prosecute them upon that very account more both of H 4

Wifd. 2.

them utterly senseless and extreamly absurd: This has been an old Grudge. Thus the Sinnners in the Book of Wisdom, Let us tie in wait for the Righteons, because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and object th to our infamy the transgressings of our Education. And again, He was made to reprove our Thoughts; He is grievous to us even to behold, for his Life is not like other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion. A very high Charge indeed, and as notable an Inference; he lives otherwise and better than we do, and therefore we must have and persecute him. But this I say is a very absurd and unreasonable way of Proceeding; for the ground of the business if fifted to the bottom, comes to no more than this, They are angry with a Man for not loving their Company so well as to be content to be Damned for the fake on't. But I think we may with great Civility beg their excuse in this matter; if they will have us do as they do, then let them take care to do as they fould do. But for a Man to make himself a Beast, utterly unsit to be convers'd with, and then to call me Singular and Unfociable, because I won't keep him Company, is hard measure.

And as these Men are guilty of an unreasonable Charge, so shall we be guilty of an inexcusable Folly and Weakness, if we depart from our Duty and our greatest Interest upon such a trisling, inconsiderable Discouragement: For then 'tis plain, that we are of the number of those low and unconsidering Spirits, that love the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God.

Let us not therefore be led away with Noise and Popularity, nor be frighted from our Duty by those empty Anathema's of the Multitude, the Censure of Unsociableness, Preciseness and Singularity. Let us be sure by doing our Duty, to satisfy our own Consciences, whatever others do or think. Let us not be carried away in the Polluted torrent of the Age, nor be Fools for Company. Let us for once dare to be Wise, and be guilty of the great Singularity of doing well, and of acting like Men and Christians; and then, if

we can have the liking and approbation of the World, well; if not, the comfort is, we shall not much want it: And we shall gain something by our Singularity, which the others cannot by their Numbers, the Rayour of God, and deliverance from the Wrath to come.

Weakerf, it wedepare from our Date and our grateful Interest upon the action of the county of the Cifcontage of the number of the law and uncefuldering Spirits, the localle Frais of the traise of th

Noile and topplantly, not be frighted to an our long that their those entry Auaring massof the male of the preciferes and Singularity. Let us be fire by doing our function ty, to tailly our own Conferences ty, to tailly our own Conferences. Whatever others do or think to tail what be control away in the Pollurcians be control away in the Pollurcian to the control away in the Pollurcian Company. Let us for book dare to be any of the great Singularity of doing well, and of action the great Singularity of doing well, and of action the Marity of doing well, and of action the Men and Ghriftians; and then, it

One way of

## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

## The Excellency of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Preach'd in All-Souls College Chapel in Oxford, upon the Founder's Commemoration Day.

Pfal. 50, 23.

Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth me; Or, as in the other Translation,

Whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise,

TO Honour and Glorifie God, as 'tis the End of the mbole, so is it the Day and Priviledge of all the Rational

Rational and Intellectual part of the Creation. God indeed has made all things for his Glory, and he fails not to glorifie himself one way or other by all things that he has made; but there are some things which he has made to glorifie him by lifee and proper acts of Worship and Homage. And these as he has more inabled, so has he more obliged to the Performance of this Divine Office, by distinguishing them as well by Favours and Benefits, as by Order of Being, and degrees of natural Excellence from the rest of the Creation.

upon the Faunder's Com Among these is Man, who though at present not so capable of this Divine Imploy as some of the other Intellectual Orders, yet he has as much, perhaps more Obligation to it than any of them all tince God has not only favour'd him with peculiar Benefits, such as the Grace of Repentance, the Honour of being Personally united to the Divinity, was but has also placed him in such a Sphere where he is the only Creature that can acknowledge and pay Religious Service to the common Greator. All other Creatures Rations praile

praise God only Passively, as far as they carry in them the Characters of the Divine Perfections, which must be confidered and acknowleded before they redound to the actual glory of the Creator. Like a Lute, which though never fo Harmonically Set and Tuned, vields no Musick till its Strings be artfully touched by a Skilful Hand. But Man can freely command and strike the Strings of his own Heart and Affections, and is the only Creature here below that can Actively praise and honour his great Maker and Benefactor. Man therefore is concern'd to honour and glorifie God both for himself and for all the Creatures round about him; and as the whole World is the Temple of the great God, so Man is as it were the Priest in this Region of it, where he must undertake the Office of honouring and glorifying God, not only in his own, but also in the name of all this brute and uncapable part of the Creation. And he is here taught how to do it in these Words of the Psalmist, whoso offers me I banks and Praise, he Honours me, or he Glorifies me.

By Honour or Glory here, I suppose is meant whatever comes within the Notion of Religious Service, or Divine Worship; and when 'tis said, that he who offers God Thanks and Praise, he it is that Honours him; I suppose tis fpoken Emphatically, and by way of Eminence, importing as much as if twere faid. He it is that honours him more particularly, and performs a more special piece of Religious Service. So that from the Words, I shall in the First place collect this Proposition, That the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion confifts in Praise and Thanksgiving.

Secondly, I shall consider what are the things we are concern'd chiefly to thank God for; among which I shall particularly insist upon that Providential disposal of Men in such outward Conditions and Circumstances of Life, as may be of advantage to surther their Eternal Interest.

Thirdly, I shall briefly represent to you, that the Circumstances of your Life are such.

Whence

Whence in the last place, I shall commend this Inference to your Consideration, that you are therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving.

The First thing to be spoken to is, that the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion confifts in Praise and Thansgiving. I confess I am not very fond of making Comparisons between acts of Religion, being not ignorant of what Religion it self has fuffered upon this very account, among a certain Generation of Men who fet up one Duty of Religion against another, as Preaching against Praying. Nor should I do it here, but that I have for some time observed, that the Price of this Duty is generally beaten down, and the Duty it self but seldom and but coldly practifed even among them who make great account of all the rest, and are more particularly addicted to a Life of Piety and Devotion. The Parable of the Ten Lepers is a true Draught and Image of Mankind; all Ten Prayed, being under a great necessity to do so, but there was

but one who bethought himself, and gave Thanks. And so 'tis in the World, where to ten that Pray, 'tis well if. there be one that gives Thanks; and even that one shall perhaps Pray ten times, before he gives Thanks once: And when he does, it shan't be perhaps with half the Zeal and Affection wherewith he is wont to Pray; which procedure by the way, I know not how to resolve into any other Principle than this, that when we Pray, 'tis for our felves and our own Interest, to procure some good, or to avoid some evil; but when we give Thanks, 'tis to God, and for God, without any Selfregard, as I shall further shew by and by. This I conceive is it that makes Men generally more frequent and more zealous in their Prayers than in their Praises. Whereas indeed the latter calls for greater Affection and Elevation of Spirit than the former, Praise being a greater glorification of God than Prayer, and indeed than any other Act of Religion.

This I might make appear from feveral grounds of Argument; but not to burthen my Discourse or your Patience

tience with Unnecessaries, I shall confine my self to this single Consideration, That to Praise and give Thanks to God, is the most unselfish and disinteressed act of Religion we can posfibly honour him with, and confequently the most noble and generous of all. The Consequence I suppose will readily be acknowledged, that if it be really the most disinteressed act of Religion, 'tis also the most noble and excellent; for the less there is of Self, and the more there is of God in any Religious Performance, the more perfect 'tis allowed to be; and though we do not with some, make it necesfary to the goodness of an Action, that it be unmercenary, and done without any prospect of Reward, yet the Reafon is, because 'tis too high a mark for a Mortal aim. We think it a Measure hardly Practicable by any, and therefore not necessary to all; not denying in the mean while, but rather suppoling, that if we could act by such a Measure, it would be an higher and more noble pitch of Vertue. Taking therefore the Argument for granted, I shall think my self further concern'd only to justify the Under-Proposition, by **hewing** 

## Practical Discourles upon

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shewing that 'tis really the most disinteressed part of Religion.

Now that it is so, will be sufficiently evident from this, that it respects the Benefits of God meerly as they are past; it has indeed the Goodness of God for its Object, as well as many other acts of Religion, but with this Difference, that whereas other acts of Religion respect the Benefits of God as they are to come, this respects them as past, and consequently can have no Eye upon future Advantage. He indeed that gives Thanks may, but not as, and fo far as he gives thanks: It may be the End of the Agent, but not of the Action. For observe, though to give thanks for Bleffings received be really a Means to procure more, as well as other Religious acts, yet there is this difference, that other acts are not only Means to Bleffings, but may be used as such to that end, without destroying the nature of the acts themselves. But now Gratitude towards God, though it be really in it felf, as much a Means in order to future Bleffings, yet it can't be used and intended to that purpose, without so far undoing the very Nature

as well as Excellency of the Action: For if I give Thanks meerly to get more, if that be my defign, this is not Gratitude, but only another way of Begging, and so my Praising will indeed fall in and be confounded with Praying, which are supposed to be distinct. So that the very notion of Thankfgiving excludes all regard to Self-interest; and what some highstown Theorifts have afferted of Vertue in general, that it loses its very Being and Perfection, by being Mercenary or done upon motives of Interest, is strictly true, of this particular Vertue, whose very Idea shuts out all respect to selfadvantage.

The short is, this vertue of Thankfulness, though it be conversant about
the goodness and beneficialness of the
Divine Nature, which is also supposed
to be actually exercised upon us, yet
it does not respect it in order to our
Interest, but as 'tis a Moral Perfection
of the same Divine Nature, and so is
rather an humble acknowledgment of
something excellent in God, whose Perfections we adore and bear witness to,
than an Address to him for something

1 2

of advantage to our felves, which as I faid before, its very Idea excludes, and cannot at all comport with.

But now this is more than can be faid of any of the other acts of Religion; when we Pray, 'tis for the Relief of our Wants, our Faith leans upon some future Good, and our Hope is a comfortable expectation of it; and even Charity it self as it respects God, has a mixture of felf-regard in it, I say as far as it respects God. For it must be yielded (whatever some pretend to the contrary,) that there is fome fort of Love which may be dis-interested and pure from any selfish Principle, namely Love of Benevolence, whereby we may wish well and do well to our Neighbour purely for his Good, without projecting any Advantage to our felves. But then this is not that Love wherewith we love God, who is not capable of our Benevolence, but only of our Desire: For when we love God, we don't pretend to wish any good to him who is already possess'd of all; but only wish him as a Good to our selves, which is the same as to desire him. Charity therefore as it respects God, is the

the same with desire of him, and all love of Defire is founded upon Indigence, and proceeds from Self-interest. So inconfiftent and unprincipled is the Discourse of those who talk of Loving God purely for himself and his own absolute Persections, without regarding our own advantage therein. We may indeed love our Neighbour fo. but so we cannot love God; for to love God, is to defire him, to defire him as our Good and Happiness, and all love of Defire proceeds from Want, and ends in Fullness. And if Love it felf must give the Precedency to Thanksgiving, I suppose none of the other acts of Religion will offer at a competition with it.

But you'll say, does not our Saviour Mat.22.38. call Love the First and the Great Commandment? To this I answer, that by Love there is meant either Love of Benevolence, or Love of Desire; if Love of Benevolence, that is no immediate act of Religion, God not being capable of being so loved, as was urged before: And therefore we may allow this to be the principal Commandment, without any contradiction

to the present Discourse which proceeds wholly concerning Acts of Religion. But if the love here spoken of, be love of Desire, then this is said to be the First and the Great Commandment, not because it excells all the rest by its own proper value, but because it vertually contains, and is productive of them all, there being nothing so difficult or naturally displeafing which he that truly loves, that is, Desires God, will refuse to do for his fake. And therefore 'tis, that in another place, Love is said to be the ful-Rom. 13. filling of the Law, that is, vertually and potentially, as 'tis a general Mother Vertue, and the principle of a more particular and special Obedience. And in this respect indeed Love is the first and the great Commandment; but if we consider the proper dignity and excellence of the action, he that praifes God honours him more, and expresses himself more generously than he that Loves him. For he that loves God, loves him for his own good, in order to his Happiness and well-being; but he that Praises him (so far as he does so, ) does it not upon any selfend, but meerly because he thinks it just

just and equitable that a Creature should acknowledge and adore the Excellency of his Creator; which certainly is the noblest as well as the justest thing a Creature can do.

Indeed Love is the only Divine or Religious Vertue that can with any pretence vye with Praise and Thanks-giving; and accordingly 'tis observable, that of all the vertuous acts and habits that are now requisite to qualify a Man for Heaven, none shall be thought worthy to be retained in it but only these Two, Praise and Love; all the rest shall be super-annuated and cease, as having no surther occasion for their Exercise; these two only shall remain to be the entertainment of Angels and Angelical Spirits to all Eternity.

But though Divine Love be equal with Praise as to this respect, in point of Permanence and Duration, yet in point of Generosity it comes far short of it; for indeed to speak properly, Love is no surther excellent, than as it partakes of the nature of Praise; no surther than as 'tis one way of acknowledging

ledging the Divine Perfections. For what commendation is it for me to Love what is my good, and makes for my Interest any otherwise than as by loving, I acknowledge and bear witness to the excellency and amiableness of the Object beloved? That therefore which is excellent in Love, is not my Coveting the Divine Good, (which I do purely for my own Pleasure and Profit,) but my bearing witness to it. And yet even here Praise will have the Preeminence, because this acknowledges the Divine Perfections Directly and Expressly, which the other does only Implicitly and by Consequence. So that in every respect, Praise and Thanksgiving will be found to be the greatest honour and glorification of God, which fufficiently establishes the Proposition laid down, That the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion confifts in Praise and Thanksgiving.

And here before I go any further, give me leave by the way, First to deplore the general defect of our common Closet-Devotions; Secondly, To commend the excellent Constitution of

our Publick Liturgy. As to the First, 'tis a fad thing to confider, that fo Divine and so Angelical a Service as that of Praise and Thanksgiving, which is so highly preferred in the Sacred Writings, and which the Man after God's own Heart was so very eminent and remarkable for, the Burthen of whose Devotion lay in Anthems and Alleluiahs, should be so neglected and fo little regarded as it is: That that which is so much the imployment and business of Heaven, should be so little valued upon Earth; and what the Angels esteem so Divine a Service, should have so little share in the Devotions of Men. There are but few even of the Devouter fort, that are duly sensible of the excellency of Praise, and those that have a considerable sense of it, are generally very backward to the Duty, and very cold in the Performance. Our Necessities often call us to our Prayers, and supply us with Devotion in them; but as for Praise, it feems a dead and heartless Service, and we care not how feldom or how indifferently it be performed. Which common Backwardness of ours, the Scripture also supposes by its earnest

and frequent Exhortations to this Duty.

But the Church of England (to her great Commendation be it spoken,) proceeds by another Measure in her Devotions, enjoyning Praise as largely and as frequently as Prayer; she has taken her Copy from the Man after God's own Heart; and as Hosannah and Allelniah, Prayer unto God, and Praifes of God, divide the whole Book of Pfalms, so do they her Liturgy, which is a Service of Praise, as well as of Prayer. This the Church admonishes us of, in the very Preface and Entrance of her Excellent Service, telling us, that we Assemble and Meet together, to render Thanks for the great Benefits that we have received at God's bands, and to set forth his most worthy Praise. Then the Priest, Praise ye the Lord, to which the People, The Lord's Name be Praised. And this is done in all our Hymns, as the Venite, O come let us Sing unto the Lord, &c. And in that noble Hymn called the Te Deum, We Praise thee O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. Thus again in the Benedictus, Bleffed be the Lord God of Ifrael.

Ifrael, &c. where we bless God for the. Redemption of the World by Christ; which also we do in the Jubilate, and in the Bleffed Virgins Magnificat, My Soul does magnify the Lord, &c. So again in the Cantate Domino, and the Nunc Dimittis, and Deus Misereatur, Let the People praise thee O God, let all the People praise thee. Besides the Gloria Patri, and many particular Offices of Thanksgiving, and the whole Pfalter of David, which is a considerable part of the Church Service. So truly sensible was the wisdom of our excellent Mother, both of the great worth and importance of this Duty of Praise, and of the general Backwardness and Coldness of Men in applying themselves to it.

But I proceed now in the Second place, to consider what are the things we are chiefly concerned to Praise and Thank God for. These in general are those things which relate to our Spiritual Concern, and our grand Interest in another World; for the same general Order is to be observed both in our Prayers and in our Praises; and as we are chiefly to Pray for Spiritual Blessings,

Bleffings, so 'tis for them that we are chiefly to return Thanks. More particularly we are concerned to thank God (as the Wisdom of our excellent Church directs us,) for his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of Grace, and for the hopes of Glory. And among these means of Grace, I think we are not in the last place concerned to thank him for disposing us in such outward circumstances of Life as are advantagious to our Salvation, it being hardly imaginable how much the diversity of these contributes to our Living well or ill. How many Persons of excellent Dispositions, of great Attainments, and of greater Hopes, have we known to be utterly spoiled and ruined, meerly by falling into ill hands; as we have it recorded of the young Disciple of St. John, in Ecclefiastick Story? And fo again on the other hand, how many Persons of Vicious Inclinations, and more vicious Lives, have been diverted out of the Road of Destruction, meerly by some accidental Occurrence, some little Providential hit

hit that happened to cross their way!

Residence to a distribution be not There is an Ingenious Gentleman of confiderable Character and Figure in the Learned World, who makes that Grace of God whereby he conducts Men to Holiness and Happiness, to be nothing else but only a happy train or disposition of external Circumstances and Occurrences. As suppose a Man falls into some very sharp Affliction, which works him into a foftness and tenderness of Mind, while he is under this sensible and pliant disposition, he happens to meet with a good Book, which strikes upon the same String of his Soul; after this, he lights into good Company, where the former Disposition receives a new and further improvement; and so on in a train of Accidents, the latter still renewing the Impression of the former, till at length the Man is perfeetly brought over to a new Order and Habit both of Mind and Life. mil T. K. S. S.

Now though for feveral weighty Reasons, too many to be here alledged. I cannot be of this Gentleman's Mind, so far as to make the Divine Grace (which in Scripture is frequently ascribed to the Holy Spirit of God working within us,) to be nothing elfe but a course of well-laid Circumstances, yet I may and must needs say, that I think the outward Circumstances of Life, have a very great stroke upon the moral conduct of it, and that the success of inward Grace does very much depend upon outward Occurrences. For not to argue from the different manner of Education upon which the quality of our future life does generally as much depend, as the fortune of the Boul does upon its delivery out of the Hand, 'tis common and easy to observe, that some Men are ingaged in such unhappy Circumstances, as do almost necessitate them to be Vicious; while others again are so advantagiously placed, as if God had laid a Plot for their Salvation.

The ground of this unequal Difpensation, 'tis neither easie nor at prefent necessary to account for, and I believe we may put it among those Difficulties whose Solution is reserved to the Coming of Elias, as the Tews love to speak of all desperate Problems. In the mean time however. this is certain, that those who are distinguished from the Multitude by such advantagious circumstances, have great reason to bless God for making the work of their Salvation so Easie, and the Issue of it so Secure, for thus difpoling them, and fetting them in order for Eternal Life. For however the glory of doing well be inhanced by circumstances of disadvantage, as 'tis spoken to the credit of the Church of Regamos, that the held fast the Faith even where Satan's Seat was; yet of Rev. 2.13. fuch vast moment is the business of . our Salvation, that a Wife Confidering Man would prefer fuch circumstances as add rather to the Security, than to the Weight of his Crown. 'Tis too great a stake to be hazarded for the glory of a greater Excellence, whether of Vertue or of Reward;

and therefore though a Life of Temptation may possibly serve to that, yet our Saviour in consideration of our state and danger, has taught us to pray that we may not enter into it.

And for the same reason that we deprecate such circumstances of Life as are apt to hinder, we are concerned to Pray for such as are apt to further us in the way of our Salvation; and our Saviour could intend no less, by his Lead us not into Temptation, than that we should pray that God would lead us into such circumstances of Living, as may not only be no hindrance, but an advantage and furtherance to our Salvation. And if it concerns us to Pray for such, then also to give Thanks for them. We ought indeed to Bless God, for every thing that contributes never fo little to fo great an End, much more for disposing us in such a state and way of Life, where we have few Temptations but to do well, and are as it were under a Course of Salva-

And this (my Brethren,) I take to be very much your case, and that the circumstances of your Life are in a great measure such as I have now described; for not to mention your grand, though common Priviledge of Christianity, which divides you from above half the World, and your more peculiar Priviledge of being Members of a Reformed Church, and that too the Best of those which are Reformed, where there is such excellent Provision made for all the Purposes of a Christian Life; where you have not only all the Substantials of Christian Religion, but those also most excellently Ordered and Disposed according to the best meafures of Human Wisdom; particularly where you have fuch an excellent Liturgy, fo Wifely and fo Divinely Composed, as might be used even by the Angels in Heaven, were there any need of Praying there; lfay, not to infift upon these things, I shall proceed to what is more Perfonal and Peculiar, and briefly represent to you the advantagiousness of your

your present Circumstances upon these Two Considerations.

First, That you here enjoy all the Advantages of Serving God in the way of a Contemplative Life.

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Secondly, That you here enjoy alfo all the Advantages of fitting and
qualifying your felves to ferve both
him and the Publick, in an Advisor
Life, whenever you shall be called to
it.

cellent - Provision - val.

And First as to a Contemplative Life; This is immediately and properly a Life of Religion and Devotion, and absolutely confidered, is the most perfect of any: This the School-men and Mystical Divines commonly represent under the Figure of Martha and Martha ry, the former of which they suppose to be the Picture of an Active Life, and the latter of a Contemplative. And whereas Mary is faid to have chosen the Better part, this they think a Warrant to give the preference to a Contemplative Life. Whether it be or no, I will not dispute, but I think the

the preference it felf is just, and that a Contemplative Life absolutely confidered, has the greater Perfection. For though there be great excellencytin an Active Life, yet 'tis meerly with relation to the present Exigence; and though the Habit of Charity shall (as the Apostle discourses,) re- 1Cor. 13.8. main for every yet thefe prefent instances and expresses of it are calculated purely for this Life, and shall utterly cease in the next. But now the Contemplative Life is to last for ever, and to be the Entertainment of that state where there is nothing but meer Excellence, where all that is imperfect shall be done away. stor Commont ite.

And this is that Life which your present circumstances both invite you to, and surther you in; here your Thoughts are your own, and so is your Time too wherein to employ them; here you live a Life free and disingaged from all Worldly Incumbrances and Secular Avocations, and blest with all possible Advantages for a Contemplative and Affectionate Religion: Here you have Solitude, Retirement, and Leisure, and so may serve God K 2 with-

without Distraction, and without Disturbance. And you can hardly well imagin till you have tried it, of how great advantage this last thing is to a Devotional Life. He that has little Business shall be Wise, says he that was fo: I may add, and shall be good too. Leisure is a great Friend to Meditation, and that to Religion. But Business is an Enemy to both; for believe me, 'tis very hard to keep up the Spirit of Devotion in Multiplicity of Affairs. He that is thus troubled about many things, is not in the way of Extra-ordinary Religion: 'Tis well if such a one can mind the One thing necessary, and discharge the offices of Common Life. But this is not your case, you have Time, and you have Leisure in abundance; you have little else to do, but to trim your Lamps, to adorn your Interiour, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God. In short. your very Profession is to be Religious; you live in a place where the Order of the Morning and Evening Sacrifice is duly observed, where you have stated Hours of Prayer and Thanksgiving to serve God in Publick, and

and all the rest of your Time is one continued Opportunity of Serving him in Private. So that you may be said, considering the advantagiousness of your Circumstances, to be in the very Emphasis of the Phrase, were pulse of some, to stand in or Acts 13. der, and rightly disposed for Headen, and your whole Life may be properly called a Day of Salvation.

And as you here enjoy all the Advantages of ferving God in the way of a Contemplative Life, fo Secondly. your have here also all the Advantages of fitting your selves to serve both him and the Publick in an Active Life whenever you shall be called to it : For befides what what makes you Good and Religious here. ferves also to make you useful and serviceable hereaster, a Pious and a Well-principled Education being the bell Preparative for a Life of Pubhek Action and Employment; befides this you have here all the Advantages of Learning that Books and Conversation and Leisure to make

and thee we are reards

the best inserand temprovement of both can possibly rassers: So that there is not Imployment or Profession either in Churchinor State, of ther Spiritual for Secularly but what you have here the Bost Helps and Advantages to sit your selves for.

And nowefince there is for much Excellency in Praise and Thanks, giving, and fince we are particularly obliged to bless God Afor Advantagious Circumstances of date, and fince the Circumstances of your present Life appearants bed emignently such a leto me nin the last place commends this to your ferious Consideration. Whether you are not therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praise and Thanksgin ving.

Certainly if any Persons in the World are, you are who are best qualified to understand the transcendent excellency of it, and also lie under the greatest Obligations and Joducements to it: Indeed you can never

never enough bless God for the Happy Opportunities of Religion you enjoy in this Place, where you are like the Trees planted by the Water side, in a growing and thriving Situation, (as the Psalmist elegantly de-Psalmist elegantly elegantly

And after a grateful Sense, and hearly Acknowledgment of these kind Dispensations, your next care should be to make such good use and improvement of them all, as may answer both the natural tendency of the Priviledges themselves, and the good Ends and Designs of God and your Pious Founder; always remembring, that if (as the Author to the Heb. 2.3. Hebrews tells us,) they shall not escape who neglect the common Advantages of the Christian Institution, K 4 which

which was fo much beyond whatever the World enjoyed before, much less shall we if we neglect so great Salvation, so great an Advantage and Opportunity of being Saved.

dear Memory we this Rully sand I hope Gratefulls

statistics which among of their kind Directions from play take to the -m. ten sys Leon dall shire of ad provence of them all as mi hoth the intuest readence the Participant when we red 200 to single that Paris of Loop

brings shelif ( as He Author to the Hebrens wells as a sper and not of cape) who negletty the common A L. vantages estue Christian Intirution.

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## IMPORTANCE

OF

A Religious Life confidered from the happy Conclusion of it.

Pfal. 37. 38.

Keep Innocency, and take beed to the thing that is right; for that Shall bring a Man Peace at the Last.

Wickedness, and a Life of Piety and Vertue, that the former consults only the present Interest,

future well-being, and lays a fure Foundation for our everlasting Peace and Happiness. The greatest advantage we can possibly promise our selves from a finful course, can be at most but to be diverted direct and pleafantly entertained for our term of Life here, which besides the uncertainty of it, is at longest very short and transitory: Short indeed, if compared to other Temporary things in the Vege-table or Sensitive World, to the Life of an Oak or in Flephant, Supa meer nothing, if ballanced with the days of Eternity: Time it self has no Proportion to Eternity, much less that Span of it that makes the Life of Man. Behold thou hast made my Days as a Span long, and mine Age 2s over as nothing in that were our whole Life one continued and intire scale of Please, nothing but intersentuality and pricurism, 'twould be but just nothing in respect of that long pare which we are to act upon another, Stage Indesd sluch a degree of Pleasantness mould, ferres to smake, it yet much thorter, and contract shanspen, into a Point. tereff

Pfal. 39.

Point. And yet this is the most that a life of Sin can possibly pretend to, (for it lays claim to nothing beyond the Grave but Misery and Destruction.) and when once the little Span is measured out all that we can then say of it, upon a repiew, will be to the sense of that severe Remark of the Stoick, H was inform track to the stoick, H was inform track and gone, but the Evil remains 3, which is a most deplorable, and afflicting Consideration.

But I speak this only upon Supposition; for indeed the Signer is seldom
or never to fortunate as this comes to;
his whole Life is but a Point, a little
Speek between Time and Eternity,
and yet 'tis not the thousandth part
of it that he enjoys. The more ufual method of Sin is to mix and
change the Scenes, to regale us with
a short Entertainment; and then to
serve up to us in the close of the Feast
a Deaths Head; to divert us a while
with Pleasure, and when that's over,
to make us pay dearly for it; to afflict
us with a sharp and perhaps long Repentance. Indeed a bad Conscience

is a Companion troublesom enough even in the midft of the most high-set Enjoyments; 'tis then like the Handwriting upon the Wall, enough to spoil and diffelish the Feast; but much more when the tumult and hurry of Delight is over, when all is still and filent, when the Sinner has nothing to do, but attend to its lashes and remorfes. And this in spire of all the common Arts of Diversion, will be very often the case of every wicked Man; for we cannot live always upon the Stretch; our Faculties will not bear constant Pleasure any more than constant Pain; there will be some Vacances, and when there are, they will be fure to be filled up with uncomfortable Thoughts and black Reflections: So that when the Accounts of a Sinful Life are cast up, this will be found to be the Sum of it, a little present gratification at the expence of a deal of fucceeding Trouble, Shame and Selfcondemnation; nothing but prefent Joys and those too frequently interrupted, and always overcharged. So that fet-ting afide the great After-reckoning, its Pleasures are over-bought even in this World, and there is this great Aggravation

gravation of the Folly of Sin, that altho some of its Pains are Eternal, yet all its Pleasures are but for a Season.

But now its quite otherwise in the Practice of Religion and Vertue: This makes Provision for our Best and Last Interest, and secures to us a Reversion of never Failing and never ending Happiness. Indeed the is not destitute even of a Present Reward, but carries in hand a sufficient Recompence for all the trouble the occasions. She is pleasant in the Way as well as in the End, for even her very Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. But 'tis her greatest and most distinguishing Glory and Commendation, that she befriends us Hereafter, and brings us Peace at the last. And this is a Portion the can never be dif inherited of, however the Malice of Men, or an ill Combination of Accidents may defraud her of the Other. And therefore the Pfalmist Overlooking as it were all the intermedial advantages of a good Life, recommends it only from that which is proper and peculiar to it. For Vice has its Present Pleasures as well as Vertue; but herein are they difdiscriminated, that 'tis Vertue only that ends well. I my self (says the Psalmist) have seen the ungodly in great Power, slourishing like a green Bay-Tree: There's the Present Pomp and Triumph of Sin. But I went by, and lo he was gon, I sought him, but his place could no where be found: There's the unhappy Close of the Merry Comedy. Then it sollows as a Practical Remarque from the whole: Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is Right, for that shall bring a Man Peace at the Last.

The Words are Naturally resolvable into these three Considerations, which shall be made the Subject of the following Discourse.

- t. That Peace at the last is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleasures of Sin.
- 2. That a good life, which the Pfalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last.

every Man to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is Right; in one word, to Live well.

The Sum and Force of the whole may be reduced to this practical Syllogism.

That which will bring a Man Peace at the last, is to be chiefly minded, and most diligently heeded:

But a Life of Piety and Vertue will bring a Man Peace at the Last:

Therefore a Life of Piety and Vertue is to be chiefly minded and most diligently heeded.

I begin with the first Consideration, That Peace at the last is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleasures of Sin. Now this Term, at the last, may be taken Two ways, either for the last and concluding Period of a Man's Life in this World, and then Peace at the last, will be all one with Peace at the Hour of Death;

or elfe for the last and unchangeable State of Man in the other World, and then Peace at the last will be the fame with Everlasting Peace. I shall consider the Proposition with respect to both these Senses: And First, for Peace at the Hour of Death; The inestimable value of which, though none are so well able to judge of as they who are really and actually concern'd in that dreadful moment, yet we may take some measures of it, by considering a little what it is to Dye, and how miserable is the condition of those who have lived so ill as to want this Peace at the Hour of Death.

And First let us consider (that which I fear we seldom do) what it is to Dye: Death is a thing of a strange and dreadful consideration, dreadful in it self, as it a Dissolution of Nature, the manner of which, because we do not know, we mightily fear; but much more so in its Issue and Consequence, which is both great and doubtful, for upon this one thing more depends, than upon all the things in the World besides. Indeed the soft of Life and the

the Pains and Agonies wherewith it is lost, are the least part of Death. This indeed is the Whole of it to brute and irrational Creatures; they suffer Pain for a while, then refign up their Breath, and lose both the Sense and the Remembrance of both Pain and Pleasure. But to the Dying Man Death appears in another Light, and with another Face: He is further to confider. that he is just now launching out into the fathomless Deep of Eternity; that he is entring upon a new, strange, dark, and withal unalterable state of things; that he shall be within some few Minutes what at present he has no manner of Notion of, and what he must be for ever; that he is now about to throw his last and great Cast, and to be resolved once for all of his whole Condition; that he is now passing from Time to Eternity, Eternity of Happiness, or Eternity of Mifery.

And what a dreadful moment then must that be, which a little precedes this great Transaction, when a Man stands upon the very edge and brink of the Precipice, just upon the turning off,

and has the great Gulph of Eternity in view! Nothing certainly can be more dreadful than this, except that very Point, that narrow Horizon that divides Time from Eternity, the end of the former, and the beginning of the latter, and actually determines the business of our Happiness or Damnation.

And now fince to Dye is no less a thing in its consequence, than to be either Damned or Saved, to be either Eternally Happy, or Eternally Miserable, it cannot fure but be matter of vast importance to a Man, to consider which of these two is like to be his Lot, when he is just about to try one of them. Nay indeed, 'twill then nearly concern him to be pretty well assu-red of the welfare of his After-state; then if ever, he will rightly understand the inestimable Price of a quiet Conscience, of a satisfied Mind, and of a Hope full of Glory and Immortality; then if ever, he will find that that which was always a Continual Feaft, is now a Sovereign Cordial and the Food of Angels; for never certainly is Peace and Comfort more seafonable

sonable than at this instant; never so much need of it, and never fo much value to be set upon it; never can it more avail us to be fatisfied concerning our final condition, than when we are just entring upon it; never more refreshing to have some few Beams of Light, than when we are passing through the dark Valley and shadow of Death. Then therefore, if ever, we shall duly value this rich Pearl, a good Conscience, and be well content if we had parted with all our Substance for the Purchase of it. We shall then be fully convinced (O why are we not fo now!) how much it outweighs all the Temporary Pleafures of Sin, yea, and the Severities of Vertue too; and that if our whole Life had been one continued act of Penance and Austerity, 'twould have been abundantly recompensed by the Satisfaction and Confolation of this one Moment. And that 'tis worth while to live Rigidly, if 'twere only upon this one Consideration, that we may dye Chearfully. payletti kod timir victu The drive and 1991

And without Question it must needs be an unspeakable Satisfaction to a

Dying Man, when if he looks backward, he fees a Life well spent; if forward, he has before him a bright Prospect of Light and Glory: When he can fay with King Hezekiah, Remember now O Lard I befeech thee, hom I have malked before thee in Truth and with a Rerfett Heart; and with the great Apostle when within view of a Tim. 4 his Dissolution, I have fought a good Fight . I have finished my Course, 1 have kept the Faith; benceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteous ness, which the Lord the Righteom Judge shall give me at that day. I say it must needs be an unspeakable, an unconceivable Satisfaction, for a Man in his last Hour, when he is taking leave of his Body, and shaking Hands with the whole World, when all are fad about him, and concerned for him, then to consider that there is a

better state, and that he has a Title to it; that when his Earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved, he has a Building with God, an House not

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Ifa. 38.

made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens: That when he shall cease to live with Men, he shall dwell with God, and converse with Angels; in a word, that he is to leave nothing but Vanities and Shadows behind him. and that he has the folid and real Happiness of a whole Eternity before him. What a mild and unterrifying thing is Death to fuch a Man as this. and with what Screnity and Chearfulpess does he entertain its Summons I He can fmile in the Physicians Face, when he hears him pronounce his Sickness desperate, can receive the Sentence of Death without Trembling, and if his Senses hold out so long, can hear even his Passing-Bell without disturbance. The Warnings of Death are no more to him, than was the Voice of God to Mofer, when he faid to him, Get thee up to Mount Ne Deut. 32. bo and dye there; no more, but get thee up and dye. For now he feels the approaches of that Salvation with Joy, which he had before wrought out with Fear and Trembling, and can lay down his Body with an holy Hope, having possessed it in Sanctification and Honour. And what a happy

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state of Mind is this! How far exceeding all the common objects of Desire and Envy, and all those Pleasures of Sin, for whose sake 'tis yet frequently put to the Hazard, and too often soolishly exchanged! To Live with Peace of Conscience is a singular Happiness, but much more to Dye with it; then, if ever, 'tis a Peace that passes all Understanding. So great reason had Balaam for that passionate Wish of his, Let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.

But this we shall be further convinc'd of, by confidering Secondly, the miserable condition of those who want this Peace at the Hour of Death: This may be conceived in a double degree, either by way of Doubt or Distrust, or by way of down-right Despair. Suppose we then in the First place, a Man placed upon his Deathbed, who has led his Life so indifferently, or Repented fo lately, or fo imperfectly, that 'tis a matter of reafonable question, whether he has an interest in the Mercies of the New Covenant or no; what a strange kind

kind of Suspense must such a Man be in, and what a strange concern must he have upon him! What a difconsolate, what a damping Thought must it be for such a Man to confider that he is now going out of the World, but does not know whither ! That there are Two States of Eternity, but he does not know which shall fall to his lot; nor, when his Soul is dislodged from his Body, who shall give her the first greeting, whether an Angel or the Devil. And how must such an uncertain Soul tremble and be confounded in this her dark Passage! 'Tis a sad thing even to be Doubtful and Unresolved in a bnfiness of fuch vast moment.

But if the Man by reason of the notorious enormity of his Life, is so far a Stranger to this Peace, as to be in utter Despair of his Salvation, I want words to express how miserable then his Condition is; with what a-mazement then will he look, both backward and forward, upon his Sins, and upon his approaching Account, and how full of Indignation will he L A

be against himself for neglecting, when he had so many Opportunities, to consider the things that belonged to his Peace, and which now he perceives to be for ever hid from his

Eyes! The Memory of a Sinful Life is always tormenting, whatever Pleafure there may be in the ads of it, and the expectation of Judgement is always terrible; but never do either of them appear in their true Colours, till a Man comes to Dye: Then he begins to have a fense and apprehenfion of them, somewhat like that which our Saviour had in the Garden, which put him into an Agony, and a Sweat of Blood. When the Man comes within view of Eternity, then will he be most concerned for his misuse of Time. The Scripture compares a Wicked Ifa. 57. 20. Man to a Troubled Sea, always working and uneafy, but about the time of Death he is all over Storm and Tempest. Who can then express the hundredth part of the Disturbance and Confusion he then feels? For a Man to think he is just going to give an account before God of such a Life as he can't fo much as reflect upon privately by himself without Shame

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and Amazement, and to be fentenced to a place of Torment, from whence there is no Redemption; to think that he has lived infignificantly and wickedly, idly and unaccountably, and neglected that only time of Probation, that only Opportunity of Happiness allowed him, an Opportunity which was procured him at no less a rate than the Death of his Saviour, and which was denved to the Angels that Sinned: To think that he has neglected to great Salvation, and that he must now be miserable and undone for ever, when with ease he might have been happy, and all this for the fake of fome little triffing Interests or Pleasures, for Dreams and Shadows, for that which never was considerable, and now is not at all: What can be more afflicting, more astonishing than this? for my part I think the Mifery on't fo great, that I can't fee how any Man could support himfelf under the Agony of fuch a Confideration, no, not though an Angel should appear to him from Heaven, strengthening him: For this a state of Mind fell of the very assistance are neither of them worthy

Blackness of Darkness, and but one Remove from the Misery of Damnation.

And now I think from this Defcription of Horrour, it may with ease be gathered, what an invaluable Blessing and Happiness it is to have Peace at the last, I mean at our last Hour. If there be any one that is not yet enough satisfied of it, let him but ask a Dying Man the Question, and then remain an Insidel if he can.

I should now consider Peace at the last, as it signifies Everlasting Peace, or the Peace of the last and unchangable state of Man in the other World, and shew how far this is to be valued beyond all the Temporary Pleasures of Sin: But this is that Peace of God which passes all Understanding, all Conception, and all Expression, and between which and any thing of this World, there is no manner of Proportion. What the Apostle says of the Sufferings, is as true of the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this present time, they are neither of them worthy

to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed: Not worthy to be compared for their Greatness, and less for their Duration. I may therefore well omit any further inlarging upon this, 'twould be almost as ridiculous to go about to give Light to a thing that is of it so clear, as 'tis to disbelieve it; and he that offers to make the least Question of so evident a Truth, is much too absurd to be seriously argued with.

I shall therefore pass on to the Second Confideration, that a good Life which the Pfalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is Right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last. And First, 'twill bring him Everlasting Peace; this is plain from the whole tenour of the new Covenant, which establishes a standing and never failing connexion between Repentance and Pardon. 'Tis the very Purchase of Christ's Death, that now Repentance may be unto Life; and accordingly 'tis not only matter of Hope and probable Expectation, but 'tis made one of the Articles of our Creed, that we may obtain

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obtain Forgiveness of Sins. Indeed Repentance is now no where in vain, but among Devils and Damned Spirits; it would have been fo with us too, had not Christ died, and fatisfied the Curfe of the Law, and the Juflice of the Lawgiver, and upon that fatisfaction erected a new Covenant. For the Law knows no fuch thing as Repentance, but the Soul that sinneth must Dye, Penitent or Impenitent. But 'tis the benefit we have by the fatisfaction of Christ, that now if we repent, we shall be forgiven and accepted with God to Salvation and Happinels. We shall certainly be faved with it, and not without it; for Christ did not (as some fancy,) so far undertake for us, that we might not Repent and live well, but that we might Repent to Purpose. He did not defign to make our Repentance unnecessary, but only to render it useful and efficacious to the ends of Pardon and Reconciliation: So that a good Life is not only the means, but the only possible means to everlasting Peace and Happiness. I me shem an and memoraki sal

As it is Secondly, to bring us Peace at the Hour of Death, nothing elfe can do it but this, and this can, and most certainly will; as a good life gives us a firm Title to Salvation and Happiness, so will it give us a good comfortable Affurance of that Title, which is always an unspeakable Peace and Satisfaction, but especially at the approach of Death. And this is the natural Consequence and Reward of a Life well spent; a good Man does his Duty with great Pleasure and Satisfaction, but he reflects upon it with greater; his Present Joys are very favoury and refreshing, but his After-Comforts are much more fo. But of all the Reviews of his Life, none yields him so much Comfort and Satisfadion, as that last general Review which he takes of it, when he comes to Dye; then he has most need of Comfort, then he is most fit to relish it, and then he has most of it. With what strange Delight and Satisfaction does he then reflect upon his past Life, and call to mind the good he has done in it! those Joys and Consolations which before maintained

a gentle course within their own Chanels, now begin to swell above their Banks and overflow the Man. A kind of Heavenly Light springs up in his Mind, and shines forth into his Face, and his Hopes and his Defires, his Thoughts and his Affections, his Presages and his Expectations, his Body and his Soul; yea, the whole Man is full of Glory and Immortality; he is conscious to himself of his Sincerity and Integrity, that he has not been wilfully and deliberately wanting in any part of his Duty, but has rather made this his Exercise and constant concern, to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man. And as he recollects this with Pleasure, so he builds upon it with Gonfidence, and accordingly refigns up his Soul into his Maker's Hands, chearfully and couragiously, nothing doubting, but that that good God whom he has fo faithfully ferved in his Life, will take care of him, and reward him after Death.

And for such an Assurance as this, there is sufficient ground in Scripture:

Great

Great is the Peace that they have who Pfal. 119. love thy Law, fays the Pfalmist: And Prov. 14. the Righteons hath Hope in his Death, 32. fays Solomon. And fays the Prophet, The work of Righteousness shall be Peace, Ifa. 32. 17. and the effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever. And says the great Apostle, Our Rejoycing is this, 2 Cor. 1. the Testimony of our Conscience, that 12. in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, we bave had our Conversation in the World. And we know that we have John 3.14. passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren, says Saint John. And again, If our Hearts condemn us Ver. 21. not, then have we Confidence towards God.

There is indeed some Controversty between the Reformed and the Romish Doctors concerning this Matter, the latter generally denying that a Man may be Assured or Certain of his Salvation; now though it may and perhaps must be granted, that he cannot have an Assurance of Divine Faith, (nothing being the Object of such an Assurance, but for which we have an immediate Revelation from God, which cannot ordinarily

narily be faid of any Man's Salvation in particular, but only of the general and conditional Proposition of the Covenant upon which we build,) yet I think there is fufficient reason to conclude from the forementioned places of Scripture, with many others too numerous and obvious to alledge, that a Man upon the confideration of his past life, may be so Morally affured of his Salvation, as to be out of all reasonable Doubt or Irrefolution about it; and he that will deny this, must oblige himself to maintain one of these Two Propofitions, either that a Man cannot understand what conditions are required of him in order to a Salvable State, or that he can't with any meafure of Certainty, judge of himfelf whether he be qualified according to those Conditions. The former of which, would reflect upon the Sufficiency and Clearness of Scripture, which must be allowed to be full and plain in necessary things, and the latter would redound too much to the difhonour and disparagement of Human Reason and Understanding; since according to this Proposition; a Man must

must be supposed to be so great a Stranger to himself, as not to know what passes within his own Breast contrary to which the Scripture supposes in that Question, Who knows the things I Cor. 2. of a Man, Save the Spirit of Man which it is in him?

It must be acknowledged, that this is not a strict Certainty, neither of Science nor of Divine Faith, but only a Moral and Human Affurance; for 'tis certain, that the Conclusion can be no stronger than the Premises: and therefore fince one of the Propolitions (that which contains my own Qualifications,) is matter only of Experimental Knowledge, which is a Human, and therefore fallible Testimony, 'tis certain, that the Assurance that rifes from the whole, can be no more than an Human or Moral Assurance. But that is enough, and he is neither Reasonable nor Modest that either Desires or Pretends to more; fince the other is sufficient for a Satisfactory, though not for an Infallible Judgment.

And yet there is something further

in this matter yet; for to this Moral Affurance grounded upon the general Terms of Salvation, ( Which are matter of Divine Faith,) and upon the inward Consciousness of our being qualified accordingly, (which is matter of Experimental Knowledge.) we may further add, that Obsignation fo often mentioned in Scripture. Rom. 8.16. Whereby the Spirit it self is faid to bear Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; not by a clear and express Revelation, ( for then the Assurance we have of our Salvation, would be an Affurance of Divine Faith, which is against what was before supposed,) but only by a secret Determination of our Minds to affent to this Comfortable Conclusion, that we are in a state of Pardon and Salvation, and by Confirming us in that Affent. After what manner this Operation of God is performed, I shall not be so curious as to inquire, itis enough to know that it is a certain impression of the Holv Spirit upon our Souls, whereby we are inwardly perswaded beyond the force

force of Rational Conviction of our being interessed in the Divine Favour, and in the Glory that shall be revealed. This is the Seat of the Spirit, and Ephef. 1. the Pledge or Earnest of our Inheri-13. 14. tance, which God often bestows upon the Children of Light in this Life, as a Reward for their past, and sometimes as an incouragement for their future Obedience. For fo favs the Spirit to the Churches, To him that o- Rev. 2. 17. vercometh, will I give to eat of the bidden Manna, and I will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written, which no Man knows, faving he that receives it.

And now fince Peace at the last is so valuable a Treasure, and since a good life is a certain and the only way to obtain it, what Consequence can be more natural and evident from these Premises than that it highly concerns us to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is right; in one word, to Live well, which was the Third and last Consideration. Indeed were Peace at the last, a thing of no great value, or were not a good Life a sure and a necessary members.

thod to obtain it; were there a failure in either of these Premises, the Conclusion would fail with it, and twere no great matter how we Lived. But fince the quite contrary appears to be unquestionably true, that Peace at the last is incomparably beyond any Temporal Interest we can propose, and a good Life is a sure and necessary way to procure it; nothing certainly in the World can be of fuch moment and consequence, as to live well: 'Tis by infinite degrees the most important thing that can possibly imploy our Thoughts, or our Time, our Studies or our Endeavours, nay indeed 'tis the One thing needful. Vain and Impertinent are all those other many things we are here troubled about, all those Thoughts and Cares we have about Time, and the things of Time, which indeed would be of little value, even to a Temporary Being, much more to an Immortal Spirit who is to live in another State, and there either Enjoy or Suffer to all Eternity. To such a Being Time certainly can be no further confiderable, than as Eternity depends upon it.

it, no further than as it may ferve as an Opportunity to secure the other; which is all the use and all the value Time and this Mortal Life can have with a wife and confidering Man. The best use therefore we can make of our Time, is to live well in it, to spend it Innocently and Usefully, Piously and Charitably in the Service of God, and in doing good to Men. 'Tis for this we have our Time, and this is the right and proper use of it, and that which will give the most Happy Conclusion to it. This is that which will yield us Peace and Comfort, when nothing else can, and when we stand in most need of it. in the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment, in either of which there is no comfort like a good Confcience.

When I shall lie faint and languishing upon my Dying Bed, with my Friends all sad about me, and my Blood and Spirits waxing cold and slow within; when I begin to reckon my Life not by the Striking of the Clock, but by the throbbings of my Puse, every stroak of which beats a M 3 Surrender

2 Cor. I.

Surrender to the Pale Conqueror, in this great Ebb of Nature, when the Stream of Life runs low, and the Eccles. 12. Wheel at the Ciftern can hardly turn round its Circle, it will be then no Pleasure or Comfort to my departing Soul to reflect upon the great Estate that I have got, upon the Family and Name that I have raised, or upon the Honours and Preferments that I have gone through: No, my Soul will then have a new Taste, as well as my Body, and these things will be as insipid to me as my Meat and Drink; only the Conscience of having done well, will then refresh me, and yield me Peace and Consolation. This is that Angel that must support and strengthen me in that great and last Agony; nothing else is able to interpose for my relief, in that dreadful juncture, and this alone will be a sufficient Comforter and Affistant. Many things there are that divert and ingage our Thoughts in the Course of our Life, but at the end of it, there is nothing that will be regarded by us, or afford us any Satisfaction but a good Conscience. Our rejoycing then will be this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and

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Godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World. And how infinitely then are we concerned to take heed to our ways, to walk circumspectly, and heartily to apply our selves to that now, which will stand us in such stead then!

Besides, 'tis our greatest Wisdom as well as Interest, and the best Proof we can give of our being Rational Creatures: We think it a great Commendation of our Reason to be able to Dispute well, and Discourse well, and we are generally more impatient of what reflects upon our Intellectuals. than of what reflects upon our Morals. But certainly to live well, is the greatest argument of Wisdom, and that which reflects upon our Morals, reflects most of all upon our Understandings. We live now in an Age wherein Craft and Worldly Policy, nay, and even downright Knavery has usurped the name of Wildom, and a Man is in danger of bringing his Parts in question, by adhering to his Duty against his Worldly Interest: But this is the Wisdom of Fools and Mad-men, of those who either think not at all, or else consider things M 4

things by halves; 'tis in short the Wisdom of this World, which the Apostle tells us is Foolishness with God. But there is another Wisdom, and that is the Wisdom of the Just; and this is that Wisdom which God commends, and which we our felves shall hereafter (when best able to judge,) commend too; for this is that Wisdom Jan. 3.17. from above, which is first Pure, then Peaceable, which will bring us Peace at the last, and whereby we shall become Wife unto Salvation.

> The Conclusion of all is, Time it felf is short, the Time of Man is much shorter; Eternity has neither end nor change, and every Man is hastening to this Eternal and Unchangable State; and therefore it infinitely concerns us all so to live while we sojourn in this World, that when we come to dye, we may have these Two things to support us in that dreadful Hour, the Reflection upon the Innocency of our Life past, and the Prospect of future Glory and Happiness.

> Which God of his Goodness grant us all, &c.

## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Heavenly-Mindedness.

Phil. 3. 20.

For our Conversation is in Heaven.

Hat Man is deeply lapsed and degenerated from a state of Excellency and Persection, is evident frem the Ruins of his Nature, which is now too faulty and desective to be the first and original workmanship of God; but in nothing is his Fall more signalized, than in that abject, servile and groveling disposition of Mind he now labours under:

under: He has suffered indeed in all his Faculties, and every String of his Soul is put out of Tune; his Understanding has a Cloud dwelling upon it, his Will has lost much of its Verticity or Magnetick Inclination towards the chief Good; but that wherein he is most diminished, and stands most alienated from the Life of God, and the order of Grace, is the Pallionate part of him, his Affections; these have fuffered fuch a vast Declination from their true and natural Point, and are so depressed into the dregs of the Material World, and are now become fo unperceptive of any thing but the gusts and relishes of the Animal Nature, that instead of serving (as they were originally intended.) to the invigoration and actuation of the Soul, they are her greatest clog and impediment in all her Endeavours and Aspirations after the Divine Life.

This is that so much Celebrated The opposition of the Platonists, the Moulting of the Plumes of the Soul; she is not only broken and wounded in her Wings, but utterly unpinioned, she

the has dropt her Feathers, and can no longer sustain her weight in the higher Regions, but falls down, and lies groveling upon the Ground, as if besides the Primitive Curse upon Man, of Tilling the Earth from whence he was taken, he had inherited that of the Serpent too, Upon thy Belly shalt thou go, and Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy Life.

And as this Demission of Soul is the most fignal instance of the Degeneracy of Man, so is it commonly the last from whence we recover; our Affections are the most stubborn and unconquerable part about us, as being blind and unperceptive Appetites, and such as are set at the greatest distance from the Light of the Mind, which shines first upon the Will, and then upon the Passions, whose illumination is therefore more feeble and languid. Hence it comes to pass, that this is the most difficult part to be managed, as there is more trouble with One Fool, than with Ten Wife Men; and when the Understanding and Will are refigned up, and given over to the importunity of him that **Stands** boos

stands at the Door and knocks, these still maintain the Fort against the Heavenly Battery, and are very often too fuccessful in their resistence. Indeed the regulation of the Pathetie part is commonly the last conquest of Divine Grace, the confummating degree of Spiritual Life, the closing feature of that Image of God which is form'd in us ; for nothing is more common than to see Men of singular Strictness and vertuous Conversa-tion in all other respects, who yet have their Affections deeply ingaged in Secular Interests, who stoop and yield to the Magnetism of this dirty Planet, and (as the Apostle phrases it in the Verse before the Text,) Mind or relish Earthly things: An eminent Example of this we have in the Story of the Young Man, who came to our Saviour to inquire what he should do to inherit Eternal Life; who though a diligent Observer of the Law, and generally accomplished with moral Qualifications, infomuch that our Lord began to have a kindness for him, yet the affectionate part of his Soul had still a wrong Bias, and was not sufficiently weaned from Earthly good ;

good; One thing thou lackest, and what was that? not more Justice, nor more Charity, nor more Temperance, but to have his Affections more loofe and difingaged from the World; for when he was bid go and Sell what he had and give it to the Poor, he was fad at that Saying, and went away grieved, though he was told at the same time, that it was to be only an Exchange, and that far for the better, that he should have Treasure in Farth.

Heaven, for what he quitted upon Mark to

But however difficult it may be for a Soul so low funk in her Affections, to recover again upon the Wing, and bear up above the steams of the Flesh, and the attractions of the Animal Nature, yet this is that excellent end which the Christian Institution aims at, and which every good Christian ought diligently to endeavour after: For what the Author of our Faith and Happiness said of some particular words of his, is true of all, that they are Spirit and Life, fuch as are able, and were defigned to reanimate the dead and senseless Minds of Men, and

to diffuse a-vital heat throughout the torpid and benumm'd World. And accordingly St. Paul tells us, that Christianity is rough to ardical of this Cons, the

Rom. 8.2. Law of the Spirit of Life, and in another place, Danovia to modual , the Mi-

2 Cor. 3. nistration of the Spirit, such as becomes a Vital Form in us, to give us Motion and Activity, and to raise us from that Sown and Lethargy, which by our Fall we were cast into. And the same Apostle makes it here the Character of an accomplished Christian, such who is fit to be proposed as an Example for our Imitation, that he is one that is not only above, but has nothing to do with the petty, trifling Interests of this lower World, but has his Thoughts and Affections wholly taken up and imployed about the Beatitudes of the next. For fays he, Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an Example; for our Conversation is in Heaven. In difcourfing upon which Words, I shall fhew,

First, What it is to have our Conversation in Heaven.

Secondly, How reasonable and becoming it is for a Christian to do

Thirdly, What are the Uses and Advantages of such an Heavenly Dispensation of Life.

Now concerning the First, I consider that Heaven here may be underflood either largely for the state of the other Life in general, by way of opposition to this, or more strictly for that special and excellent Portion of it, Glory and Happiness. If we confider it according to the former fense, then to have our Conversation in Heaven, will be to be perpetually mindful of our Mortality, and that we are Citizens of another World. and must shortly take our leave of this; to have a constant prospect into that other World which must be our last Home, and to be always looking beyond the Horizon of Time, to the Long Day of Eternity, to dwell in the

the Meditation of the Four last things, Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment; how great they are in their Consequence, how certain in the Event, and how near in their Approach, and in consideration of all this, to be always preparing for our great and sinal Change.

But if we consider it according to the latter and stricter Sense, then to have our Conversation in Heaven, will be frequently to contemplate the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Essence. the First of Beings, and the Last of Ends, and the unconceivable Happiness of those who shall enjoy the Communications of his Blessedness; to Contemplate, and have always in view that weight of Glory, that incorruptible Crown with which the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared, no not to be mentioned. To Meditate Day and Night upon that happy time, when we shall be Partakers of Moses's Wish, and be admitted to that intimate and naked Vision of that Mysterious and Incomprehensible Excellence, which is too great for our Mortal Faculties, and which

will

which none can See and Live: When Exod. 33. we shall fee him not in Symbols and Figures, not in Glories and fensible Manifestations, but openly and clear ly, really and as he is, and from feeing 1 Joh. 3.2. him, be transformed into his Likenes; To meditate upon the bleffed Society of Saints and Angels, upon the delicious repairs of Anthems and Alleluiahs, and that more ravishing Harmony of Divine Love, and intelleand Sympathy; upon the elevated and raifed Perfections of a glorified Soul, the inlargements of its Underfrancing, and the firblimations of its Will and Affections , and upon the Angelical Clarity and Divine Temper of our Referrection Bodyle In fum. upon all those glorious things which are fooken , and which even he that faw them could not atter, of the Co 2 Cor. 12. ty of God and upon the infinite + Confolations of that joyini Sentence, Come ye Blessed of my Father, Inheris the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World. Lastly to contemplate all this not coldly and indifferently as a thing that is a great way off, or as an uncertain Revertion, or maginary Utopia, but as a flate that

will shortly and certainly be, and with that Faith and Assurance which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; to Dwell, Converse, and have our Civil Life in Heaven, (for so the word modificial signifies,) as if we were already Inhabitants of that Blessed Place, and actual Members of that Sacred Policy and Community.

of Diving-Lave Land, inche-This is to have our Conversation in Heaven, this is that Heavenly-Mindedness which the great Apostle who had personally conversed in the Third Heaven, and feen there more than he could utter, proposes to the imitation of his Followers, and for which he esteemed himself fit to be an Example: Which leads me to shew Secondly, what a reasonable and becoming thing it is for a Christian thus to have his Conversation in Heaven; and to convince him that it is so, let him confider. the Lindon sweet of for you

First, That the other Life is the state we are chiefly intended for, without respect to which there is nothing in this considerable enough to justify the

the Wildom and Goodness of God in making the World; that here we have no abiding City, no durable concern. and confequently what a folly 'tis to let our Thoughts dwell where we but Sojourn our felves; that this prefent state both by reason of its shortness and other Vanities, is upon no other account confiderable, than as 'tis an opportunity for, and a Passage to the next a that as it was not worth while for God to make it, so neither is it for us to live in it, if it were not in order and relation to fomething further; that itis a short Voyage, and where the Haven lies always in fight that 'tis the greatest short-fightedness imaginable, not to fee beyond so little a prospect as the Grave, and the greatest stupidity and dotage, to confine our Cares and Affections on this fide of it, if we do: 'Tis true indeed if there were no other state but the present, twould be our greatest Prudence to make as much of it as we could, though 'twere more vain and contemptible than 'tis, because 'tis our All; 'twould then be as reasonable to have our Conversation on Earth, as now itis to have it in Heaven, and the N 2 Epicure's

Epicure's Proverb would then be as Wife as any! of Solomen's, Let we Eat and Drink, for to Morrow we Dye. But fince we are affured by him who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel, that there is another state; and that our Death is but the beginning of a new and neyer to be anded Life, this one would think should deserve and engross all our Thoughts and Affections our Meditations and Discourses, and that we fliould be no more concerned with the things of this World than a Gheft is char only comes to do a Mellage of Providence, and when his Errand is over, vanishes and disappears. Orif we did at any time condescend to interest our selves in the Affairs or lawful Entertainments of this Life, methinks it fould be only transiently and by the by, as the Hungry Disciples pluck'd the Ears of Gorn , just to ferve a present Necesfity, or asothe Ifraelites are the Paffo-Exod. 12. ver, in halt, with our Loins girt, our Shoes on our Feet, and our Staff in All: 'twould about se as reathned ruo

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ceive it as it is at the but we make Secondly, Let him confider that as the other state is the chief and proper state of Man, so Heaven is the good and happiness of that state, that tis the true and natural Centre of our Reft, our Home and Native Region; that the Joys there are unipeakable and full of Glory, fuch as the Senses of Man cannot taft, such as his Understanding cannot at prefent conceive, and fuch as it will never be able to comprehend; Joys that are without example, above experience, and beyond imagination, for which the whole Creation wants a Comparison, we an Apprebension, and even the Word of God a Revelation. That Esernal Word of God, which opened to us a Profpect of a future state, and brought Life and Immortality to light; yet he attempted not to give us a representation of the Heavenly Felicity, but thought fit rather to call that unexpressible Scene of Glory into a Shade. For indeed to what purpose should the Son of God go about to reveal the Secrets of the Kingdom to us, fince if it were possible to describe it as it #; yet 'tis not possible for us to con-N 2 ceive

ceive it as it is described, but we must Dye and be Partakers of it, before we can either understand it or indure it; this therefore would be a Revelation without a Discovery, a Revelation which he himfelf only could understand, another Sealed Book which none but himself would be able to open. Since then Heaven is a Place of such transcendent Glory and Happiness, as our present Faculties are not fine enough to conceive, nor ftrong enough to bear, what can be more reasonable and becoming, than that we who are now journying in the Wilderness towards this our Heavenly Canaan, where is our Portion and our Inheritance, should have our confrant Conversation there by holy Contemplations and devout Affections, that so according to our Saviour's Argument, where our Treasure is, there our Heart may be also? For what can be either a more noble or a more concerning Object for an Human Soul to Contemplate, than its last end and sovereign Happiness 3 when all its Changes and Revolutions shall cease, all its Appetites be satisfied, and nothing further to be expected

pected but a most delightsome continuation of the same endless circle of Felicity? Certainly one would think, that what will so wholly take up and ingage the Soul when she comes to enjoy it, should be thought worthy to employ her best Thoughts now, as undoubtedly it would, did we firmly and heartily believe it. And therefore

Thirdly, Consider that we have no other way of approving the fincerity and heartiness of our Faith, concerning Heaven and Happiness, but by having our Conversation there; for fo great and glorious things are spoken of the City of God, that 'tis not morally possible that a Man should be heartily perswaded of the truth of them, and yet not to have the main current of his Thoughts and Affections run in that Chanel: How is it possible that a Man should believe fuch great things, and yet not have his Thoughts dwell upon them? Some things indeed may be very little questioned, and yet as little thought of, because their Moment and Importance. carries no proportion to their Truths N 4

they are Realities, but Trifles. But fure the things we now speak of, are too concerning, if true, not to be frequently and feriously considered: If once we are thoroughly perswaded of their Truth and Reality, their own concernment and importance will be enough to recommend them to our most inward and recollected Thoughts and Meditations; and therefore for my part when I see Men plunge themselves into the depths of Sensuality and Worldly Interests, as if they never meant to rife again, to love the World as they are commanded to love God, with all their Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength, to have no serious Thoughts and Remembrances of Heaven or Heavenly things, but to fet up their Tabernacles, and fay 'tis good to be here, I must conclude, (and they may think me uncharitable if they please,) that whatever they pretend, they do not heartily and seriously believe there is any fuch place as Heaven; for if they did, confidering the vast importance of the thing, it would certainly have a greater share of their Contemplations, and a larger room in their Hearts. And this very thing our Saviour

Saviour intimates in his Reprehension of the immoderate Carers for the World; These things, says he, the Gentiles seek, those who have no Revelation to assure them of a better and more induring Substance: Having no certainty of the suture, they make the most of the present, and in so doing, ast in some measure according to their Principles. But seek ye first Mat. 6. the Kingdom of God; ye that have a 32,33. Revelation of a nobler end, and of a far more excellent state, do you apply your selves principally to that, or else you will not act like your selves, and may justly be suspected of not Believing that Revelation which the others want.

Fourthly, Consider that as the having our Conversation in Heaven, is an argument and test of our Faith, so is it also of our Resurrection with Christ, and our Spiritual Life; the Connexion is made by the Apostle, If ye be then risen with Christ, seek Col. 3. 1. those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God; set your Affections on things above, and not on things of the Earth; for ye are Dead,

Dead, &c. In which Discourse 'tis evident, that the Apostle does not only exhort to Heavenly-Mindedness as a Christian Duty, but makes it also a certain Mark and Argument of Spiritual Life and Refurrection. The Marks and Signs of Grace have made a great part of some Mens Divinity, and they are generally fuch as do not want for Latitude and Comprehensiveness; to be fure they contrived their business, so as to take in themselves and their own Party. But certainly there is not a more notorious Criterion whereby to distinguish the prevalency either of the Animal or of the Divine Life, than to consider how the Moral Tast and Relish, that which the Platonists call Aya Josed's, the Boniform faculty of the Soul stands affected. 'Tis a shrewd Symptom of an ill habit of Body, when the Tast comes to be so vitiated, as to delight to feed upon Trash and unwholsom things; and so 'tis in the state of the Mind, the Animal and Senfualized Man, as he does not Perceive, so neither does he Relish the things of God; they have no congruity with that Life and Sense that is most invigorated and awaken'd

in him, and therefore he prefers his Husks and Acorns before the hidden Manna, and the Food of Angels. But he who is born of that incorruptible Seed mentioned by St. Peter, and in 1 Pet. 1. whom the Divine Life is most excited, 23. he having his Spiritual Senses well difposed and exercised, finds a particular gust in Divine things, contracts his Affections upon Heaven and Happines, looks upon all inferiour good as dry and insipid, and is ready to fay with the Pfalmist, One thing have Pfal 27. I defined of the Lord, even that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my Life, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple. This is the Desire, this is the Relish of a Spiritually disposed Soul, of a Soul that is dead to the World, and alive unto God; the Sum of all which is briefly comprized in that of the Apostle, They that are after the Rom. 8.5. Flesh do mind or (as the Word also fignifies,) do relish the things of the Flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. This is a short and compendious, but a very great Test of Spiritual Life, and that whereby we may distinguish a

vital Sense of Religion from a formal Profession of it.

Fifthly and Lastly, Consider that one great end of our Saviour's Ascending into Heaven in his Human Nature was, that we Christians might have our Conversation there; in order to which end, the Ascension of Christ has a double Instuence, First as a Rational Motive, and Secondly as a Moral Emblem.

First as a Rational Motive; for fince the Ascention of our Saviour into Heaven adds new Supplements of Support to our Hopes of arriving thither (his Ascension being a Pledge and Pattern of ours,) it must needs at the same time fan the Flame of our Affections, and make them tend upwards with importunate reaches towards Heavenly Objects. For this is a Maxim which Experience as well as Philosophy has stamped for truth, that the more our Hope of any good is established, the more our Desires after it are increafed, and that nothing fooner cools the Fever of the Affections, than Despair of Fruition: Whence it follows, that the Ascension

Ascension of Christ by adding surther incouragement to our Hopes, becomes a Rational Motive to us to refine and elevate our Assections, and to have our Conversation in that Heaven of our Interest in which the Ascension of Christ in our Nature is so convincing an Assurance.

On a Mines and Spiritual Afrent : Secondly, As a Moral Emblem; the whole course of our Saviour's Actions tends to our instruction and admonifhment; and though some of them were never intended to be copied out in kind, as being fet above the Sphere of our imitation, yet they are not fo far out of our reach, but that they point out to us some resembling Excellence, and may be imitated though not literally, yet in Figure and Mystery. Of this kind are the Refurrection and Afcention of our Lord; for although with him we cannot as yet loofen the bands of Death, and break the Prison of the Grave, yet we can now in some sense rise with him, from the Death of Sin, to newness of Life, and are by his Refuerection not only inabled, but also admonished to do so. And altho as to his Bodily Ascention,

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(as our Lord told St. Peter,) we cannot follow him now, yet we can in fome fense ascend with him, by a pasfionate elevation of our Thoughts and Affections, and are also mystically invited to do the latter from the Contemplation of the former. The Local and Bodily Ascension of Christ, calls for a Moral and Spiritual Ascent; If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me, said our Lord in reference to his Crucifixion. How much more powerful then ought this Confideration to be in reference to his Ascension; for it cannot be said of him now, what was then, when his Beauty was benighted under a Cloud, that there is no Form nor Comelines in him, that we should desire him; for now are the Mists scattered before the prevailing Sun, he shines forth in his full Glory and Triumph, yea, he is now altogether Lovely. Now therefore may the Pious and Seraphiek Soul bear up her felf upon the wings of Contemplation, Love and Defire, and follow her Ascending Lord where the Eves of the wondring Apostles were forced to leave him, and fay in the Words of Elisha to his departing Master,

John 12.

Master, as the Lord liveth, and as thy 2 Kin. 2.2. Soul liveth I will not leave thee 3 and blessed is he that hath part in this first Ascension, for over him the Second Death shall have no Power.

And thus have I shewn by several Considerations, what a reasonable and becoming thing it is for a Christian to have his Conversation in Heaven; but it will appear yet much more so, if we consider in the Third and Last place the great uses and advantages of such a Heavenly dispensation of Life, and they are many; but I shall consider only some of the most remarkable of them.

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First, This is a most excellent expedient to beget and confirm in us the contempt of the World, and of all those Pomps and Vanities of it which we renounced in our Baptism; this is a mighty thing, and a thing that has been essayed by several methods, as by Monastick ingagements, by retiring into Cloisters and Deserts, by Vows of Poverty and the like: But these are rather Natural than Moral ways of sorsaking the World; and this considerable

John 17.

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fiderable that our Savious in his last Intercession for his Disciples, prays not that they should be taken out of the World, but delivered from the evil of it. The best way to forsake the World, is to do it in Heart and Affection, and the most effectual means to do this, is by converting in the other World. This indeed may be done by a ferious Contemplation of the powers of external Nature, and of the capacities of our own, by comparing which two together, we may be fatisfied of the Vanity and infufficiency belial Worldly Objects to the purposes of Contene and Happiness. And this was the course that Solomon took to convince himself and others. of the Worlds Vanity. But besides that this is a long way about, and a way that requires a great deal of Time, and a great deal of Experience, and a great deal of Meditation and Reflection a it is also a Method fit only for finer and more elevated Spirits, thole of a Contemplative Genius, and of a Nice Diferrment. But to Converse in Heaven , is a more compendious and easy Method to contemn the lower World more practicable to the liderable

the common forts and those that cannot in the other way Dispute and Demonfrate, may however in this be feefibly convinced of the Vanity of the World. The Earth to us that dwell upon it. feems a Body of confiderable Magnitude, but to one that should take a view of it from one of the higher Orbs, twould appear but as a Point The same indeed might be demonstrated upon Mathematic Principles, but every one is not capable of doing that, and fuch an high rais d prospect would fave the trouble And for tis in the case before us a this World confidered alone may perhaps carry with it a specious and goodly Appearance. and he that does so consider it, will need Reafon and Argument to conwince him of its Vanity a but 'ris but to converte a little in the other World. and take a view of it from thence and 'twill all without any more ado thrink almost into nothing. And therefore twas not without reason that the Divine Philosopher stiled Philosophy the Theory of Death & for certainly the Contemplation of the other state, is the most compendious way to true Philosophy, the Contempt of the World Contract.

World far beyond all the ways of Reason or Discourse, all the rigid and mortifying leftures of Swicifm. And accordingly I observe that the Author Heb. 11.9. to the Hebrews fays of Abraham, that by Faith be Sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a strange Country, dwelling in Labernables and the tealon of his doing formore exprelly fellows, for he looked for a City which has Foundations. whose Builder and Maken is God; so that this was that which drew off A. braham's Affections from the Land of Promife A becadle by Faith he had a Profect of la far better Country. and had his Conversation in Heaica forcious and goodly Appearance.

Secondly, This is the best Remedy to support us under the Evils of this present Life; as in lessess the good, so in lessess the evil of it too, and will serve to support us under the one, as well as to wearons from the other. Nay, to speak the truth, it will not so much support us under these Evils as take them away, and render them slight and inconsiderable. For suppose the worst that can be, Death, and a Painful Death, he that has his Conver-

Conversation in Heaven, views the Glory that thall be revealed there, and at once fees that the sharpest Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with them, no more than the Point of a Circle is with its Circumference: He contem plates the Joy that is fet before him, and so indures the Cross, and despites the Shame and the Pain too: For a view of Heaven will mitigate any Cross upon Earth, and help us to incounter any Affliction as St. Stephen did his Martyrdom: He is one of those fieldy Men the Pfalmift speaks of Pfal. 112.7. who are not afraid at any evil Tidings, but his Heart stands fixed in the Lord. Much less will he for the dread of any Perfecutions or World ly Losses deny his Religion; or by a Trimming and Hypocritical Mode of Behaviour, court the Favour of those in Power, or by any finful compliance part with a good Conscience. He sees nothing so great or so terrible in this World, as to fright him into any fuch unworthmesses; no, they that do so, have not their Conversation in Heaven, but are Earthly, Senfual and Devilish, and for all their Pretences to 0 2 Self-

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Self-denial, deny nothing of themfelves that I know of, but their Understanding. He that truly converfes in Heaven, fees infinitely more there than he can either get or lose here, and can therefore never be guilty of such a Foolish Exchange, as to gain not the mbale, but a little of the World, and lose his own Soul.

Thirdly, This Dispensation of Life is the best Preparatory for Heaven that can possibly be; for besides that cralled the greatness of that Happiness makes him that Contemplates it, despise any good or evil that may here frand in coms petition with it; he further confiders the Nature and Quality of that Happinefs, that it is an union of the Soul with her best and last end, that it is a clear Vision and an ardent Love of God, who cannot be feen by him that Lives, much less by him that Lives ill; and this must needs put him upon thinking, that a Holy and Divine frame of Spirit is absolutely requifite, not only as a Condition to our Admission into Heaven, but also as a Condition of Enjoyment, without which there

there is no being Happy even when we are there. And from this Confideration, he naturally paffes to fit himself, for the enjoyment of his Maker, to Purify himself as he is Pure, to Purge, Refine, and Spiritualize his Nature, that so he may be qualified for the refined Joys of Heaven. The short is, there are Two things that must and will be considered by him that has his Conversation in Heaven, the Greatness of the Happiness there, and the Nature of it s and each of these has a particular influence for the preparing him for it: The former will make him Temptation-Proof against any present good or evil that shall stand in his way to his great Prize, and the latter will contribute to form and fashion the frame of his Mind into a likeness and affinity with the end which he propoles: But both together will to strongly influence the Man, that he will become perfeetly inarraison Q , dead to himfelf and to all the Luccious Relifies of the Corporeal Life, and the Life of God will be triumphantly feated in him, so that now he has but one only Will in the World, which is to have 03 none

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Mischard Valence from one

This I know will be far from fatisfying some Voluptuaries, who are funk so low into the contrary Life, that of Sense and Carnality, that they will think a Man Mad that shall either Talk or Live at this Abstracted rate; but to these I have Two things to fay : First , That their having no notion of the Pleasure of this Dispenfation, is no Objection against it; the thing may be true for any thing they know or can fay to the contrary, for they are not, during the quick fenfibility and invigoration of the lower Life, proper Judges in the case, any more than the Sense it self is of an Intellectual Object; for these things are spiritually discerned by a certain Divine Tast and Sensation, which is a Faculty which these Men want.

The other thing I shall commend to the Sensualist is this, that since he is too scrupulous and sceptical to take our word for it, he would endeavour after such a degree at least of Spiritual Purisication, as to try the Experiment, that as the Psalmist speaks, he would Tast and See how good

good and pleasant this Heavenly Conversation is; and then I'm much mistaken if he does not find that all the Madness lay on his side, if he does not confess that there are no Joys like Spiritual Joys, and that one Day spent in these Ante-Courts of Heaven is better than a Thousand.

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And now fince it appears to be a thing of so much reason and becomingness, and of so great use and advantage to have our Conversation in Heaven, methinks we should easily be perswaded to enter upon this Heavenly Difpensation of Life. The Region we now Converse in, is very incommodiously feated, and of an unwholfom Complexion, fuch as does not at all agree with the Constitution of the Soul, where the is always fickly and out of order, full of weaknesses and indispositions; why then do we not change our Abode, and remove our dwelling into our Native Conntry, where there is a purer Air, and a more healthy Climate? When we hear or read a Description of a very pleafant Country, such as the Bermuda Islands.

16.76

Islands, where the Sky is Serene and Clear, the Air Temperate and Healthy, the Earth Fruitful and Entertaining, where there are Walks of Oranges, and Woods of Cedar Trees though we have not probable profpect of ever going to dwell there, yet we can't chuse but often think, and sometimes dream of it, and wish our selves the happiness of so pleasant an Abode. Why then do not our Thoughts dwell more in Heaven, where belides the far greater delightsomness of the Place, we have a particular Interest and Concern to invite us thither? Tis the hope of arriving at Heaven at last that supports our Life upon Earth; it is not able to support it self: One or two turns here, gives a Confidering Man a full compass of its Enjoyments, and he no fooner comes to understand them. but he despises them. And what shall a Wife Man do, what refuge has he after this Discovery, but to Converse in Heaven? What Expedient is there left, but to anticipate those Joys, when he can no longer tast these?

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So that there is a necessity of Conversing in Heaven, if 'twere only to resieve the Vanity of Earth; and happy is the Man who has so much of Heaven while he is upon Earth: Yea, Blessed is the Man whom thou choosest Psal. 65. 4. O Lord, and receivest unto thee; he shall dwell in thy Court, and shall be satisfied with the Pleasures of thy House, even of thy Holy Temple.

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## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Submission to Divine Providence.

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John 18. 11.

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The Cup which my Father has given me, shall I not Drink it?

Lord puts to himself; and itis well he did so, for had he put it to any body else, itis great odds but that it had been answered in the Negative; for the great

great and general Center of Human Nature, whither all the Lines of Appetite tend, and where they all meet, is Happiness: The defire of Happiness is the First and Master-Spring of the Soul, as the Pulle of the Heart is in the Body, that which fets all the Wheels on works and governs all the under-motions of the Man : Tis that original Weight and Bias which the Soul first received from the Hands of her Creator, and which the can never lose so long as the her self is: Tis indeed the Brongest and most radical Appetite that we have in Appetite to which God has not let any bounds, and to which Mannesses; an Appetite that is ungovernable and unconfined it felf, and that gives Meafures and Laws to all the reft; and confequently there is nothing which fo ill comports with our Nature, which fo directly croffes the grain of one Constitution, as that which threatens or offers the least contradiction to this ruling Inclination of it. Hence it is that Evil is the great antipathy of Human Nature, which though it has many particular Aversions, yet this is her great and general Abborrence: From

From this at its first approach the whole Man thrinks in, and stands averse, and would be removed from it (if possible) an infinite distance; the Animal part of Man is against it. and the Reason of Man wonders and disputes how such an uncooth thing came into the World, and feveral Hypotheses have been advanced to account for that Strange Appearance 3 76 See no was the great knot of antient Morality, and the most gravel ling Problem of all the Heathen Philosophy; and I question whether Reafon without the affiftance of Revelation can conquer the Difficulty: So that confidering the Opposition that it carries to the whole Man, both to our Appetites and to our Understand ings, there feems nothing more difficult than to be reconciled to it, though it be in order to a greater advantage, and we see an excellent glory behind Confincion, as that whichfool ent dreffers that teathers tilling with

Pain are the two Nails that fasten both the Wings of the Soul down to the Earth, and hinder its Ascent up
Epittetus. Ward: And the Wise \* Stoick has most

most excellently summ'd up the whole difficulty of Vertue into into and inexen, to Abstain and Sustain: Indeed Abitinence and Patience are the Two most rough and uneasy Places in all the Stage of Vertue; the rest of her ways are ways of Pleafantness, and all her other Paths are Peace. But here the Traveller meets with Trouble and Discouragement, is ingaged in a point of Labour and Contention, and though in the Event he perform his Duty and bear forth good Seed, yet its always with the reluctancy of his lower faculcies, and (as the Pfalmist expresses it.) he goes on his way forrowing. Ph. 126.

there of Mankindward was fellowed But the chiefest and noblest Scene of Vertue lies in Patience; his hard to abstain from Pleasure, but itis much harder to indure Milery, (which is the Reason by the way that the Sanchions of Laws are generally taken rather from Punishments than from Rewards,) and of all Obedience, that which is Passive is most difficult; for we hate Pain to an higher degree than we love Pleasure. And of this the Internal Spirit was fo fensible, (one who dwelling with everlasting Burnings NOV

ings is best able to judge of the dissieulty of submitting to Misery,) that
he presumed to say concerning that
excellent Person whom God had commended for his Integrity in all the
instances of Asive Obedience, and
whom he himself knew to be a Mitacle of Patience in particular, that if
God would but put forth his Hand,
and touch him with some near and
Job i. ii. cleaving Afflictions he would curse him
to his Face.

And to this purpole 'tis fet further observable, that even the Disciples of the Bleffed Jefus whom he had picked and chosen out of the promiseuous Herd of Mankind, and who followed this Lamb whitherfoever he went, and traced him through all the narrow paths of a Vertuous and Religious Life, yet when he came to Mount Calvary, within view of the Cross, they all forlook him and fled, Stope Bort at the foot of the dreadful Hill, and left him to tread the Wine-press alone: And even he that had most courage and prefence of Mind, and dared furtheft, he whom St. Chingfoftom calls the Warm Disciple, even he fol-

Luke 12. calls the Warm Disciple 54. lowed him but afar off.

Nay,

Nay, even our Bleffed Saviour himfelf, who befides the peculiar excellency of his Human Spirit, and the incentives of an Omnipotent Love, had also the Divinity of his Person for his immediate Succour and Support; as he fainted as to his Bodily strength under the Load of the Cross, fo was he amazed into an Agony and Sweat of Blood at the very apprehension of what he was to suffer upon it, and almost fainted in his Refalution too, till after the recollections of Meditation, and the confirmation of an Angel, he overcame the tenderness and reluctancies of innocent Nature, with the perfection of Submiffion and Refignation, emptied himfelf of his own Will as he had formerly done of his Heavenly Glories, and refused all help and deliverance both from the Guard of his Angels, and the over-officious Sword of his zealous Apostle with this gentle Reproof, Put up thy Sword into the Sheath; the Cup which my Father has given me shall I not drink it ? a boyand alartoit glandon dands Langest correctly

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The full sense of which Words is resolvible into these Two Propositions.

First, That every Assistion which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence; which is intimated in these Words, the Cap which my Father has given me.

Secondly, That therefore he ought to submit to it with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Resignation of Spirit, intimated in the last Clause, Shall I not drink it?

And First, that every Affliction which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence: That there is such a thing as Providence in general, and that God does concern himself in the Government and Management both of the Material and Intellectual World, by ruling and ordering the Mations of the former, and the Actions and Events of the latter, though denyed by the School of Epicurus, is yet I think acknowledged by all that own a Creation, and certainly

tainly with great agreeableness and confidency with that Principle. For besides that Creation doth both suppose and produce Love towards the Creature, suppose it as the Principle, and produce it as the Effect, it being impossible that God should either Create what he did not Love, or not Love what he has Created; according to that Observation of the Wife Man, For thou loveft all the things Wild. ir. that are, and abborrest nothing which 23. thou bast made; for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadft hased it, I fay, belides that Love of God which follows upon the Creation, and that care which as closely follows upon the Supposition of his Love, I further consider, that it had not been worth the while for God to have created a World, if he did not intend to govern it; for fince the World is not capable of governing it self, and conducting the infinite variety of its own motions to any exceldent end, and fince without some conduct or other, it must needs fall into disorder and confusion, if God will not undertake the Government of its to what purpose should he make such Toring !

a World, which without his care of it would bring him more Dishonour by its After-diforders, than Glory by its first Production? And Disorder is a thing so opposite to God, that we find he could not be reconciled to a Natural Chaos, much less then can he be to a Moral one, especially in a World of his own raising 3 for indeed Creation is too great a work to be bestowed upon a World which is ever after to be abandoned and left to it felf. And fince God has ingrafted into the nature of every Animal, affectionate Propensions towards its own Productions, whether Natural, Mechanical or Intellectual, nothing can be more abfurd than to imagin, that he would be so ill a Parent himself, as to expose this his own Offspring, and which affoon as brought forth, he Loved, and pronounced very good, to the uncertainties of Chance and Contingency. i sait anifordino bas Alsian vices of its own monors to which excel-

Besides, we are naturally led to the existence of Providence by the consideration of the Divine Persections, such as his Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Goodness and Justice.

ftice. And accordingly we find, that even Aristotle and the Peripateticks. who would not allow the World to be Created by God, as supposing it to be Eternal and Uncreated, yet were forced from the Contemplation of the Divine Excellencies to acknowledge it to be Govern'd by him, They own'd a Providence, though they disown'd a Creation, and that from a ferious confideration of the excellent nature and attributes of God which they thought would sufficiently ingage him to take care of the World though be did not make it : And truly were the Supposition possible, I should yet think as they do ; for fure God is too great and too good a Being to fuffer Anarchy and Confusion wherever there is a Capacity of Order. ovo I vine to

Epicurus indeed turns this Argument quite a contrary way, and from the Perfection of the Deity, argues for his profound Repose and Inactivity; that being fixed upon his own Center, and full of himself, he has nothing to do but to live at large, secure and unconcerned, and enjoy the richness of his own Essence, with an infinite

and undivided Complacency. But this all depends upon that precarious and ill-natured Principle of his, that all Benevolence proceeds from Indigence, or which is the same in other terms, that all Love is Self-Love; which indeed if true, will oblige us to confess, that the more perfect and felf-fuffielent any Being is, the less solicitous he must be of the concerns of others; and confequently a Being absolutely Perfect as God is, must of necessity be wholly deflitute of all Benevolence towards other beings, and without any concern for their welfare. For no confequence is more plain than this that if all Love be from Want, then that Being who is absolutely removed from Want cannot be capable of any Love. Epicarus his Inference therefore is very right, but the ground upon which he proceeds is falle, in making all Love to owe its rife to Indigence.

Theor. and laced Notion, having particularly conRegulat. of fidered it elfewhere; I shall only remark at present, that the falseness of
this

this Epicurean Principle, is put out of all Question to us who believe a Creation; for if, that Love proceeds from want, be an Argument that a perfect Being can have no Love, then we may argue as well the other way, that if a perfect Being does Love, then Love does not proceed from want. And we have a sufficient discovery of this in the Creation, which confidering the Self-sufficiency of the Divine Nature, must needs be the effect of a pure, unfelfish, and difinteressed Love: which by the way is a confideration that mightily commends the excellency of the Divine Goodness, and should wind up our Affections to great Heights of Praise and Gratitude.

And as the Self-Sufficiency of God is no Bar egainst Providence, (being only upon a mistaken Principle of B-picurus alledged to that purpose,) so are his other Persections a strong Argument for it; that is consistent with it, and these do necessarily inser it. Thus his Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience render him abundantly able to sit at the Helm of this P A great

great Vessel, and his Goodness and Justice ingage him to undertake the Charge. He that contemplates the former, can no longer question, How Job 22.13. doth God know? can he judge through the dark Cloud ? Nor he that contemplates the latter, suspect, that he purposely declines the Office, and malks idle and unconcern'd in the Circuit of Heaven. Besides, the Persections of God would not appear fo conspicuoully, if there were no Providence. Tis great to Create, but tis more to Govern a World as the Skill of the Artist is more seen in well ordering and artfully touching the Strings of a Musical Instrument, than in the first making and framing of it.

And if it be once granted that there is a Providence, 'tis an abfurd and ridiculous conceit, to confine it, (as some do,) to the Supralunary Regions; for the same Arguments that infer the being of Providence in general, conclude also for the Universality of it. Tis most congruous to think that the Providence of God is of equal extent with his Creation, (for sure that which was not too

too mean to be Created, cannot be too mean to be Governed.) and that the fame loving and Harmonious Spirit that first moved upon the face of Gen. 1. 2. the Waters, and ranged the most minute particles of Matter into Beauty and Order, does still run through the now Organized Mass, and prefide over, and sweetly direct, not only the Greater, but also the Lesser Motions of this his most exquisite Machine: For without this, the Harmony of the Universe would be very defective, and its parts disproportionate and ill-forted. 'Tis true, Beauty and Order would dwell above, but all would be Chaos and Confusion below, and the Earth would still be without form and void. And thus the irregularity of the Lower World would cast a disparagement upon the whole System of things, as the untunableness of one or two Infruments dif-recommends the whole Musical Consort.

Tis therefore necessary to affirm, that the Providence of God extends to both Worlds, as the Sun Beautifies and Inlightens each Hemisphere.

In this respect also as well as others. that Divine Comparison will hold. God is Light, and in bim is no Darkness at all. But though nothing be too fmall or inconfiderable for the Comprehensive reach of the Divine Cognizance, yet we may reasonably suppose, that he considers the value of his Creatures, and proportions his Providential Care according to their different excellencies. Now throughout all the order of the Visible Creation. Man is the most noble and accomplished Being, and consequently the chiefest Object, the most peculiar Charge of Providence; so peculiar, that as the Creation of other Sublunary things carried a particular respect to Man, fo is their Government too chiefly in subordination to his Interest. And indeed 'tis no more than what by the Measures of Proportion we are warranted to suppose, that he should have a more than ordinary Interest in the care and superintendency of his Creator, who was made by an immediate Pattern from himfelf, and with his folemn Counsel and deliberation.

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Nor is this ever waking and broad Eye of Divine Providence open only on Societies and Communities of Men, and intent only upon the Revolutions of States and Kingdoms, but also watches over the affairs and concerns of every particular Person in the World; no Man is too little and despicable for the notice of Providence, however he may be overlook'd by his Fellow-Creatures; for we are told in Scripture not only of the Guardian Angel of the Jews and the Prince of Persia, but that we should take heed how we offend or despise even the meanest of Men, because of the interest they have among the Angels of special Presence, Mat. 18.10. the Courtiers of Heaven. Nay we are told by the same infallible Oracle, that even the very Hairs of our Head are all numbred; for that not only the Meanest of Men, but even the meanest things relating to them, their most indifferent and infignificant concerns are under the charge and care of Providence.

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And if the care of Providence be fo very punctual and exact even to Grains and Scruples in the most trifling and indifferent Concerns of Man, we may with great reason conclude, that it is much more fo in our more weighty and confiderable Interests; And fince not only our present but future Happiness depends much upon various junctures of Circumstances and States of Life, we have confequently reason to conclude, that these are more particularly conducts ed by God's Providential Hand; and accordingly that Affliction comes not forth of the Dust, neither does Trouble spring out of the Ground, but are difposed and ordered by God, and Arrest us with a Divine Commission. And accordingly the excellent Wifdom of our Church in her Office for the Visitation of the Sick, piously orders the Minister to exhort the Sick Person after this Form, Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of Life and Death, and of all things to them pertaining, as Touth, Strength, Health, Age, Weakness and Sickness: Wherefore, whatsoever

ever your Sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's Visitation, &c. As indeed we have reason to think that every other Affliction is as well as Sickness, that there is a Chastising as well as Destroying Angel, and that all Plagues are from God as well as those of Egypt; that no Calamity can either privily steal, or violently break in upon us without the Divine notice and particular permission. But that every bitter Draught which we take, is weighed, mingled and reach'd out to us by an invisible Hand, by the Dispensation of Providence, that 'tis a Cup which our Father has given us: Our Infinitely Wife, Good, and Compassionate Father, one who knows to chuse for us infinitely better than we can for our selves, and whose Infinite Goodness, Love and Faithfulness, give us all possible assurance that he will use his Wildom for our best Interest, and give good Gifts to bis Children, Which leads me to consider the Second general Proposition, that therefore we ought to submit to every Dispensation with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Relignation of Spirit. Patience PHYRIAL

Patience and Refignation under all Providential dispensations however difficult in the Practick, has yet perhaps more to be faid for it in the Theory, than any one instance in all Morality; but I am obliged by the limits of my Discourse, to confine my Thoughts at present to such Arguments and Confiderations only as may be afforded by the excellent Nature, Attributes and Relation of God. For 'twas for this reason alone, that our Bleffed Lord chearfully submitted to the drinking of his Bitter Potion, because 'twas given him by his Father, The Cup which my Father has given me.

And that this is a Pillar strong emough for so great a weight, a sufficient Argument for the most Heroical Resignation under the most accumulated Assistance of our Blessed
from the example of our Blessed
Lord who supported his labouring
Courage by this single Consideration,
under the weight of his unparallel'd
Agony, will clearly appear, if we
consider some of the excellent Attributes

butes and Perfections of God. These which more eminently conduce to this purpose, and wherewith I shall at present content my self, are his Supream Dominion, his Self-sufficiency, his Infinite Wildom, Goodness, and his Parernal Relation to us.

First, Then we may consider, that he from whose Hands we receive our bitter Cup, has a Sovereign Right and Dominion over us; which though we flate at the lowest pitch, and do not bottom it with fome upon the work or Expereminency of the Divine Nature, or with others on the unlimitedness of the divine Power, but rather (which indeed feems more reafonable, ) upon the benefit of Creation, yet even then will follow that he may justly make what deductions he please from the fum of our Happines, within the Compass and Latiande of that Benefit. And confequently we have no just reason to murmur, as if Injured, though either by Deprivements or politive Anticions the diminish our Happiness, so long till he leave us in a state just preferable to that of Non-existence; though Gorino

piness to the very Lees, strip us of all good but that slender one of Be-

Tree but this One, that grows in the whole Paradise of God. Thus I say by reason of the freeness of his Favours, God may deal with the most innocent and spotless of all his Angels, who after all this vast Substraction, and in this state of extream Barrenness and Sterility, are yet his Debtors; and therefore instead of Murmuring and Repining, obliged to take up the live I will praise the Lord; yea as long as I have any Being, (though nothing besides,) I will sing Praises to my God.

But though God might justly do this, and consequently though even in this case, Patience and Resignation were highly reasonable, yet its not his method to deal thus arbitrarily with us, or to proceed to the utmost Bounds of his Dominion; he has by his very donation of Being to his Creatures, given them all the sair grounds imaginable to hope and expect

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expect that all his after proceedings toward them shall be agreeable and correspondent to that his first Favour, and that he will never take from us the least Scruple of that Felicity wherewith he invested us at the first Minute of our existence, without either our own fault, or a reference to some further Advantage; the first of which takes away all occasion of Complaint, and the Second calls for our Praise and Eucharist.

with community or the countries which And that this is the measure whereby God deals with us, we may be well affured, if we consider the other remaining Attributes, his Selfsufficiency, his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and his Paternal relation to us; God is a Being, whose Happinels as 'tis always perfect, equal, uniform, and at full height like his other Excellencies, fo is it wholly absolved and consummated within himself, and admits of no Foreign Ingredient into its Composition. He is as happy as he can ever possibly be in his own Effence, and confequently can neither receive nor propose

any advantage to himself in any change that is wrought in the Creature; he stands in no need of our Happiness, much less of our Misery, and therefore whensoever he lays an Affliction upon us, since he can have no Interest of his own to serve by it, we must either say that he afflicts us meerly for Affliction's sake, or that he designs it in order to a more important good of the Patient: To affirm the sormer would be Absurdity, Impiety, and Blasphemy, and withal contrary to the express voice of Scripture, which tells us that God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men The latter there-

Lam. 3.33. does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men The latter therefore must be concluded, that all the Evils which God dispenses to us, (except only where our extream Demerit alters the Case, as in the instance of Damnation,) are designed for our greater Interest either here or hereafter, and to Persect or Consecrate

Heb 2.10. US through Sufferings. They are indeed the Arrows of the Almighty, but fent upon a Friendly Errand; prefent Interruptions, but future Inlargements of our Happiness; like the Misty Veil of the Morning, which for sun, but at length contributes to the greater Lustre and Triumph of the Day.

And to this purpole we may further confider, that the great Moderator of the Universe, and Supream Disposer of all Events, is infinitely Wife and Good, as well as Self-fufficient, and confequently cannot but do all things for the Best; for as he is too Self-fufficient to drive on any interest of his own, so is he too Wife to mistake ours; and too good not to execute the dictates of his Wifdom; the confequence of which two Suppositions, must needs be the diff pofal of all things in the best way and manner that is possible. 'Tis much more rational in it felf, and less derogatory to the Divine Perfections to suppose with Epicurus that God does not at all meddle with the Affairs of the World, than that he does it by balves, and steers his great Veffel with a diladvantagious conduct. There is no Artist, but will perform to the utmost of his Skill? provided it be as easy for him to make 0 2

his Piece compleat, as to under-work it. And that 'tis fo to God, we can no more dispute, than we can the absolute Infinity and Persection of his Nature. Certain therefore it is. that if God governs the World, 'tis govern'd altogether as well as 'twas made, that is, as well as is possibles Otos yeaperpei, fays Plato, God acts the part of a Geometrician, does all things exactly and regularly 3 thus he made the World, and thus he governs it, he proceeds by the fame Standard in both, and his Government of the World is no less Mathematically exact than his Creation of in 'Tis true indeed, the exactness of the former is not so obvious to our observation, as that of the latter, nor are we fo well able to judge of the Moral, as of the Natural Geometry of God: But confidering the Perfection of God, and the Imperfection of our Capacities, we have no reason to question, but that one is as exact as the other, and both as exact as possible. Not that this is to be under-Rood in an Absolute, but in a Relative Senfe; for as to the Perfection of the Natural World, we do not require that

that every species of Being should be in the highest Perfection, whereof a Creature is capable, Cfor if the mbole 1 Cor. 12. Body were an Eye, where were the Hears 17. ing?) So neither are we to measure the perfection of the Moral World by fingle and separate Instances, but by the whole conduct and course of the Divine Dispensation. And then as in Musick, what is Discord in particular and feparately confidered, will be Harmony upon the whole; a far more excellent Harmony to the Intellect, than the most curious and artful disposition of Sounds can be to the Senfe. abel ; the Devide, God that He all in all

Tis true, we want Light in this Valley of Darkness and Night of Ignorance, to discern this Harmony and beautiful conspiracy of things, (which is the true ground of all the Discontent that is in the World;) but hereafter, when our eye fight shall be cleared and fortified to see our Glorious Maker as he is, we shall then with the Beauty of his Face behold that of his Providence, we shall see the deep Plot of this great and wonderful Drama laid open and unravel'd, and how even the most Cloudy

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and Doubtful states of things wind up into Beauty and Harmony: We shall fee and be well fatisfied, that there is a Geometry in his Providence, as well as in his Creation ; and that as all things were made, to are they governed too in Number, Weight, and Measure. Then shall we not only patiently and nieckly fubmit to, but with full acquiescence and complacency of Spirit, rejoyce in the accomplishment of the whole Will of God, though it be in the Damnation of our nearest Friends and Relatives Then shall there be an intire resolution of our Will into the Divine, God shall be all in all, and his moderation oppia, his manifold and various Wildom, though not fully comprehended, yet shall be fo much understood; as to be fully ju--fliffed by all his Children. char is in the World's) but here-

Ephel. 3.

In the mean time, till we are in a capacity to judge our selves, we may and ought to repose a firm considence in the skill of the Divine Dramatist, and believe implicitly that there is a most incomparable Beauty in the whole Scheme and System of this his great Master-piece, though

though to us who fit in a dark corner of the Theatre, some of its parts seem obscure and perplex'd; that (as the Wise Man expresses it,) Wisdom Wisd s. 1. reaches from one end to another, and that he has poured her out upon all his Eccles. 1.9. Works.

And is there now, any room for fuch a Passion as Grief or Discontent after such a Consideration as this? Can a Man acting upon this Supposition be so absurd as to be disturbed at any Accident, to repine under any Condition, to take to heart the los of any Friend, though another and a better Self, though his whole Happinels were compendioully fumm'd up in him, so as to lose all at a Blows when at the same time he seriously considers, that all things are as well to as they can possibly be? Certainly he that is troubled at any Affliction. may well be inspected of one of these two things, either of forgetting that God governs the World, or of charging him with Male-Administration. He infinuates by his Grief and Discontent this much at least, that he dislikes the order of the Universe, and that

would steer its Course after another method; and does therefore deferve 1. 6 W to be remembred of that which Labe told Melanathon, when troubled that the Reformation did not move on fo smoothly as he would have it, Monendus est Philippus definat effe Rector Mundi, Philip is to be put in mind that he leave off governing the World.

> offer certainly were we thoroughy fatished of the infinite Wildom and

Goodnes of God in the disposal of all events, Were this Perfusion deeply fixed in us, and liftimately present with us, that all is for the Best, we should The Argument enough not only for Patience and Contentment, but also for Rejoycing and giving Thanks in all Dispensations; we should (as Sene-cu well expresses the Temper of his Wife Man,) non folum Deo parere, fed fignation to the Divine Will, but approve and imprace it with full choice, as our best Lot and Portion, and lay Epiderms. With another excellent Stoick, Byd one will not only endure, but plead for the dif-

di spensations of Providence, and juftily them to the World. We should not then content our felves with that of the Royal Prophet, I became dumb and opened not my Month, because it was thy doing, but proceed further, and Plal. 39. kis the Cross even while it oppresses and galls our Shoulders, and go forth to meet our Sufferings, after the example of our Divine Mafter, who withdrew voluntarily to the Garden where he foreknew he should be apprehended, and there as freely furrendred himfelf when he might have escaped: We thould not fo much as with to have avoided any Calamity; and though we took never to much delight in our Paradife, yet after we heard the Voice of God walking in the Garden, and received his Sentence to depart, we fliould not endeavour a re-entrance, though we could remove the fiery Sentinel, and prevail with the angry Cherub to sheath his Sword, but should rather thank God for his severe Merey, and fay with the great example of Patience, The Lord gave, and the Lord Job 1. 11. bath taken away, bleffed be the name of M Dabation & reford of his Sepream Dominion be

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disconstances of Panishmon, and There remains yet one Confideration more, and that is the Paternal relation of God; he that gives us the bitter Cup, besides the Essential benignity of his nature, has also a near relation to indear him to us; he is our Father, and therefore cannot but be very tenderly affected toward us. He loved us when we were but an Idea in his own Understanding, much more does he now, when we have actually participated of his Spiritual Nature, and not only fo, but of his peculiar likeness too; Add to this, that he has shewn himself to be a Father by infinite Favours and Kindnesses, some of which border almost upon Fonduess and Partiality, in fo much that they have raised enuy in some of the Angels. and wonder in all the rest : For there are things done for Man, which the Angels have long contemplated, and

Pet. 12. yet Still defire to look into.

Shall I not then drink the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? My Father who is too full and perfect to need my Milery, though in respect of his Supream Dominion he might 0.1911

might to great degrees arbitrarily afflict me; who is too wife to mistake my true interest, and too good (for 1 John 4. he is Essential Goodness, and his very 8. Definition is Love,) to prescribe me a Draught which he knows not to be wholfom for me? who has given me all the good I enjoy, and who has parted with more for my fake, than he can possibly take from me in this World; for he has given me his Beloved Son, the brightness of his Glory and the express Image of his Perfon, shall I then receive good, so great a Job. 2. 10. good at his hands, and not receive evil? Shall I refuse the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? no, may the considering Sufferer say, I will welcom the sharpest Arrow that comes from his Quiver, I will rest heartily fatisfied with his feverest difpensations, and though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.

Let us then at all times and on all occasions with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Resignation of Spirit be Passively as well as Actively Conformable to the Divine Will, and demean our selves as becomes Children under

under the Chastisement of so wise and so good a Father; let us not only with calanness endure, but with content and satisfaction approve and justify all his Dispensations; so will he justify and acquit us hereafter, and to the present benefit of our Afflittion, superadd a Reward of our Patience, and reveal to us such an excellent Glory with which the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared.

To which God of his Infinite Mercy conduct us all, Amen.

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Let us then at all times and on all occasion occasions that the continue of the continue occasion of the continue occasion of the continue occasion of the continue occasion occasions the continue occasion occasions occasions that the continue occasions occ

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## A

## DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The Folly of Covetonfness.

Luke 12. 20.

But God Said unto him, Thou Fool-

IS somewhat strange to confider that Wisdom should be a thing desired by all, and highly pretended to by the most, and yet that Men should betray their Folly in nothing more than in their Judgments concerning Wisdom; and yet this is the frequent as well as unhappy sate of the many Pretenders

tenders to Wisdom that are in the World, who in nothing take such absurd measures as in this. We shew indeed enough of our Weakness and Ignorance in the search of Nature, and in what we call our Philosophy: We live among Mysteries and Riddles, and there is not one thing that comes in at our Senses, but what bassles our Understandings; but though (as the Wise Man complains,) hardly do me

wifd 9.16. Wife Man complains, ) bardly do me guess aright at the things that are upon Earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; yet find them out we do in some measure, and are feldom so very much out in our Judgments, as to mistake in Extremities, and take one contrary for another: Tis very rare that we take the vertue of a Plant to be Hot, when its extreamly Cold, and he must be a very mean Botanic now, that shall gather Poison instead of Potherbs, and yet this we often do in the conduct of Life, and in the great Ends and Measures of it. Here we often mistake one contrary for another; Evil for Good, Darkness for Light, and Folly for Wildom. We do not only act foolishly, (for that were fomething toleratolerable, would we but acknowledge and be ashamed of our weakness,) but we back this Folly with another, applaud and justify our absurd meafures, and think our selves Wise not only while we are Fools, but for that very thing wherein we are so.

The generality of Men place their Wisdom in that which is directly their Folly, and their greatest Wisdom in their greatest Folly; they lay deep Plots for shallow Interests, and are very flight and superficial in their Contrivances about things of real Moment and Consequence; they work out a frame of little Deligns, with as much industry, art and wariness, as the laborious Spider weaves her finewrought Web, and to as much purpose, to catch a Fly, to bring about a Trifle, when the tame, perhaps half the labour, and thoughtfulness would have ferved for the fecuring a weighty and substantial Interest.: And yet when they have done this, they think they have been very Shrewd and Polinck, and compafied a very notable Point, and are Proud of their little Atchievement, and fancy the Title of

Wife as much their due, as if pronounced so by the Oracle, and as fire and well established, as if their Wifdom as well as that of Solomon, had built her House upon Seven Pillars. little thinking all the while that he that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to Scorn, that the Lord shall Pal. 2. 4 have them in Derision: That God. whose Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts like our Thoughts, has already weighed them in a truer Ballance than that wherein they weigh themselves, and finds them wanting; wanting in what they chiefly pretended to, and charges them with downright Folly and Madness. For this was the case of the Rich Man in the Parable, the Fruitfulness of his Ground had put him upon a new Expedient, and he was very busie and thoughtful within himself how to find room to dispose of his Goods : What shall I do, says he, because I have no room where to beltow my Fruits? The Poor Man it feems was as much straitened in his Plenty, as other Men use to be in the extreamest Poverty's What shall I do? the very Language of those who are reduced to Straits!

DEZ

Do? why, give the overplus to the Poor; and that thou mayst not be so overfrock'd again another Year , part with a good piece of thy Land, and build an Hospital. No lays he leunderstand better things than so althis will I do. I will pull down my Bards and build greater, and there will I bestow (not on the Pour ) wall-my Fruits and my Goods; and I will fay to my Soul, Soul thou haft much Goods laid up for many dears . to thine Eafe, Eat, Drink and be Morry. This was his Refolution; and a Wife one too as he thought, applieding him-felf as much in the Wildom of his Contrivance, as in the Fruitfulness of his Ground: But God faid wate dies Thou Foolisment Date main he wells

It is here supposed, that the Rich Man thought he had done wifely, and proceeded by the best Measures of Prudence and Discretion, in that the Judgment of God is here by way of Opposition set against his sole it seems, and God were of two different Apprehensions, But God stide into him; From the Words therefore I shall in the First place observe, how wastly the R. Judgment

didgment of God differs from that of Men, and particularly that what we count Wisdom here, is Folly with him : And fineethe Judgment of God is always infallible, and ageording to the truth and reality of things, I shall therefore in the Second place confider the great Folly of what God hereicondemne as fich a Forft, Of Sin regimeral in Secondly, Of placing our thappiness and Coment in the good things of this World t And here I shall confider the great Folly of Coverous 6, and mariambally of the Coverous Rich Minute Pert and as por

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And First ; als observe show washing illerent the judgident of God is from that of Men, and particularly that what we count Wildom here, is Folly wish him! Me Thought days God mithen we how ill age my Ways a for a the Hakuem are higher than the Barth. fo are very Wage higher than your Maye and was Thoughts they your Thoughts Indeed the disproportion is very gree between Babib and Heaven, herwent the Point santh the Cucumintence of to valt a Cirole, and yet this does but faintly de contra

Va. 5. 5.

faintly shadow out the mighty dispreportion that is between the Measures or Men and the Ways of God; for the difference is as great, as between Truth and Falthood, which are removed from each other by an un meaforable distance. There's more Truth than we are cally aware of in that fancy of Honser, that the Gods call things by other Names than we do; so far are they from thinking of Thought, that they do not so muc as speak in our Phrase. Not only the Thoughts of God are above ou reach, but even his very Words a appula phuela, Words that cannot be atter'd by a Mortal Tongue, nor understood by an imbodged Understand ing 5 there's an unimaginable difference even in the very Nomen-clature as well as the Logick of Careli and Heaven, for God dwells in map proachable Light and Glory, nay, he himfelf as St. John telle us, is a pure and unmix'd Light, a Light which has no Darkness, and to which nothing is dock, but all things open and na-ked. He therefore pierces through the very Effences of things, sees them all in their proper Colours, and calls them

them all by their proper Names. He has before him in one simple view the whole Field of Truth; nay he is very Truth himfelf, and confequently can no more be deceived in his Judgment of things, than he can cease to be what he is. But we, though we fee in his Divine Light, yet we have it reflected to us through false Mediums, and mingled with Clouds and Milts, and thick Darkness. We look upon Truth as we do upon the Face of the Setting Sun, through a groß and fallacious Atmosphere, and by a Refracted Ray, which makes it to appear where it is not; for we see through a Veil of Flesh those dim Speciacles of the Soul, and the Vapours of the Body cloud the Understanding, and blunt the Edge of the Mind. We seldom discern things as they truly are, and when we do, we can hardly keep true to the Judgment which we have once rightly made, but are oftentimes by the intervening Eclipses of sudden Passion, actually ignorant of what we habitually know, and then act as foolilhly and abfurdly, as if we had never known it. These are the accidental Dilad-

Disadvantages we labour under, befides the finiteness of our Understandings, which even in the Perfection of our Nature are bounded within a narrow compass. And fince this is the Case between God and us, the Judgment which God makes of things, must needs be vastly different from the Sentiments of Men; for if the Judgment of one Man be fo widely different from that of another, if the Conceptions of Philosophers be fo far removed from the fancy of the Vulgar, and the Measures of an Experienced Statesman be so quite otherwife than those of a poor Home bred Peafant, how vaftly different must the Measures and Judgments of God be from those of Men, who sees Darkness even in the Angels of Light, and charges the loftiest Scraph with Folly! Certainly fo very different, that they are for the most part quite contrary; in so much, that what we think Truth, and withal dogmarically pronounce as fuch, and perhaps bind with an Anathema, God in the mean while judges to be Error, and what we take to be Wildom, he esteems to be Folly: And I doubt most

Stamp, as will not pass above in the Regions of Light, however current it may be here below by the advantage of this our Night and Obscurity: And the Apostle says plainly of the Wisdom of the World, (which indeed is the Wisdom of the most,) that his Foolishness with God.

of hypothesis and the higher hand

But of this we shall be better conwinc'd by some particular Instances, whereof there are a Multitude, but I shall briefly touch upon a few. And First, as to the frame of the Natural World, some Mathematicians and Naturalists have quarrel'd with the Geometry and Contrivance of it; one diflikes the Situation and Motion of the Sun, in making some Countreys so very Hot, and some so very Cold, and in occasioning so frequent Eclipses. Another quarrels with the conduct of the Weather, and can by no means think it well that a full Cloud should empty it felf upon the barren Sand, or upon the Sea, when in the mean time many a rich Ground is almost flarved for want of Relief from Heaven ; and he can as little reconcile it

to wife Administration that the hopes of the promiting Year thould be profited in Pieces by the rude Arrest of an unfeafonable Frost Another wonders to what purpole there should be such valt numbers of little Infects why there should be any such thing as Poison, and why among Fishes the Greater should prey upon the Las and why those which are Food for us, should be for thick fee with little Bones ; and he can never forgive Nature for the Lumminney and cale growth of Weeds, when choice Flowers are hardly brought up even with Labour and Care. Bue to all this and the like, the Judgment of God flands directly opposed, who upon a Solema Review of his Works pronounced all things good that he had made, and found not one Erratum in the Whole Book of Nature Was a March or noit very cross amount count is risks community

of the Moral World; we don't like the System of this wither; but are wont to be distanssed; First, That there should be any such thing as E-vil in it; this has been ensured as a great Flaw by a whole School of Phi-R. 4

lesophers, and the most favourable Plea they could advance for it, was to refolve it into Necessity, and the Invincible Stubborness of Matter; as much as to fay 7 God could not help it. And those who could be pretty well reconciled to the being of Evil in the World, would yet by no means indure to think that the greatest share of it should light upon good Men. This was ever an unanswerable Scandal and an unmoveable Objection; and yet tis most certain, that if God did not judge it best upon the whole matter, that there should be Evil in the World, and that the most of it too, should fall upon those who deserved the leaft, he would never fuffer either the one or the other.

There is yet another thing in relation to the Moral World, which lies very cross upon our Minds, and that is the Adjournment of the full Administration of Justice to another World; we would fain fee it in this, and are for an immediate and visible distinction and separation to be made between Good and Bad, between the Tares and the Wheat; and because we see anonfool of

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to censure the Order, if not to question the very Being of Divine Providence. But it seems the Judgment of God is against ours, he thinks it not so well that the Tares should now be separated from the Wheat, but that both should grow together till the Mat. 13.30, Harvest.

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Thus again as to the Matter of the Christian Faith, and the manner of planting it in the World, which the Apostle in one Word calls the Preaching of the Cross; this we know was a Stumbling Block to the Jews, and Foolishness to the Wise Greeks, who were then the Vertuoso's of the World; and yet we are told by an inspired Pen, that 'twas both the Power and the 1 Cor. 1. Wisdom of God.

Thus again as to the Government of the Christian Church, even those who have received the Christian Faith, are not altogether satisfied with that; for many of us are apt to think that Christ would have made much better Provision than he has for the good of his Church, if he had constituted

Judge of Controversies, by whom all Difficulties might be cleared, and all Difficulties might be chartened, which now so contound and divide the Christian World; I say many who do not believe that there is any such Constitution, are yet apt to think and say, that twere a thing much to wish'd it had been a great deal better so than otherwise; and yet God we see in his Wisdom has not thought six to have it so.

Thus again as to the condition of Human Life, we commonly imagin it would be mightily for our Advantage to have a prospect of Function, and to foresee what shall happen to us hereafter; and accordingly we are very curious to tast of the Fruit of this Tree of Knowledg, and to pry into the obscure Manuscript of Destiny; and some are so impatient, that they will have recourse to the Devil for such Discoveries rather than fail. And yet we see God in his manifold Wisdom has thought sit to Sent up this Book of Futurities from our Eyes,

and will not trust us with so dangerous a piece of Knowledge.

Thus again Laftly, We many of us think it a great Point of Wildom to heap up Wealth, to get Honours and Preferments, to raile Families, to perpetnate a Name; and we are hugely fatisfied with our good Policy and Discretion, if we can secure to our felves a little Portion of this dirty Planet, this little Spot, this Point, though we pay for it, not only the Price of Labour and Care, Contempt and Diffrace, Danger and continual Fear, but even the great Price of our Future Inheritance, and part with our Religion, and our very Souls in the Exchange. This we oftentimes think Wisdom to do for a little of the World; whereas in the Judgment of God, to gain the whole upon fuch Terms, would be but an ill Bargain. What shall it Profit a Man, says our Saviour, to gain the whole World, and lofe his own Soul ? Yes, but there are forme, and never fo many as in this Age, that think this no fuch unprofitable Merchandize, but are very well content to fell Heaven for Earth, Happiness

for Vanity, and will readily part with

the great Reversion of another World for a Turf of Ground in present Posfession. This is the way of them, and they think they do well, and that they may fay of themselves all the while what the Wife King did in the midst of all his sensual Indulgencies. Eccl. 2. 9. also my Wisdom remained with me. But however these Men applaud themselves in their extraordinary Reach and Policy. God in the mean time has another Opinion of their Conduct, and will fay to every one of them, what he did to the Rich Man in our Parable. Thou Fool. tra en land word Line

And now whereas the Judgment of God is ever Infallible, and according to the truth and reality of things. I am hence led in the Second Place to consider the great Folly of what God here condemns as such; the thing condemned, is the Conduct of the Rich Man, which he himself thought Wise, but God thought very Foolish; and the First ground of the Charge wherewith God taxes him, was the Sinfulness of it; he was a Fool because a Sinner. I shall therefore in the

the First place reflect a little upon the Folly of Sin in general: Sin and Folly, Sinner and Fool, are Words in Scripture, especially in the Writings of Solomon, of a parallel Signification, and are indifferently used one for the other: And the Schools of Morality infinuate the same in that common Aphorism of theirs, every Sinner is ignorant. Has & proy Ingos ayrost, fays the Socratical Proverb. Indeed Sin has its Birth in Folly, and every Step of its Progress is Folly, and its Conclusion is in Folly; there is its Rife, there is its Advance, and there is its End: But this will appear more distinctly from the confideration of these Two things. First, The absurdity and madness of the Choice which every Sinner makes. Secondly, The Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment before he makes it: These Two things, wherein is comprized the whole Folly of Sin, have been by me already confidered \* elfe- \* Resfor where 5 but because it is a Confidera- and Reli-tion of such an uncommon importance, 250. I shall rather present it here again to the Reader with a little Alteration, than refer him to it.

As for the Abfurdity of the Sinners Choice, 'tis the greatest that can be imagined; for what is it that he chuses d'is to do that which he must and certainly will repent of , and with he had never done, either in this World for its Illers's and Sinfulness, or in the next for its fad Effects and Confequences. Tis to despute the Authority, Power, Justice and Goodness of God; 'tis to transgress his Commands which are good and equitable, and in keeping of which there is prefent as well as fiture Reward; 'tis to act egainst the frame of his Rational Nature, and the Divine Law of his Mind; 'tis to diffurb the Order and Harmony of the Creation, and by extra-lineal motions to violate the Sacred interest of Society: Tis lastly, to incur the Anger of an Omnipotent and Just God, and to hazard falling off from his Supream Good and the laft end of his Being, and the being ruin'd in his best interest to all Eternity. All this the Sinner partly actually incurs, and partly puts to the hazard in the Commission of any one Sin. And for what is all this? Is it for any CON-

confiderable Interest, for any thing that bears something of Proportion, and may pretend to Competition and a rival weight in the opposite Scale of the Ballance? No, 'tis only for a Shadow, for a Trisse, for the gratification of some baser Appetite, for the acquirement of some little Interest, which has nothing to divert us from adhering to that which is truly our Bost, but only that poor Advantage of being present, though at the same time its Vanity be present with I.

And now is this a Choice for a Wife Man, for a Man of common Sense? Ney, is it a Choice for a Man of any Sense at all, for one in his right Wits to make? Is therea better Demonstration to be had of a Mans being a Gool or Med then this? No editately, and were it not for the Castomariness of the thing, and that too many are concerned, this would be thought a sufficient Reason why a Man should be keeped for a heal, or lead to Bedlies: For if Absurdicy of Choice be any Argument of Folly, the Sinner is centainly no common Fool, there being no Choice to absurd, so maccountable as his.

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But his Folly will further appear, if we confider Secondly, the Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment, before he does or can make fuch a Choice ; all Sin is founded upon Ignorance and Mistake. for as 'tis impossible to chuse Evil as Evil in general, so is it no less imposfible to chuse any particular kind of Evil as Evil; and consequently tis impossible to chuse the Evil of Sin as fuch: The Devil himself (as Abstract a Sinner as he is, ) can't love Sin as Sin. If therefore it be chosen, it must be chosen under the appearance of Good, and it can have this appearrance no otherwise than as considered as a leffer Evil, (for that's the only way whereby an Evil may appear good or eligible,) and so it must be confidered before it be chofen. He therefore that chuses Sin, considers it at the instant of Commission as a leffer Evil and therein confifts his Error and Mistake , he is either Habitually or Adually Ignorant, he either has not the Habitual Knowledge of all those things which should preserve him in his Dury, or at least he has

has not the Adual Confideration of them; for 'tis that which must bring him to Repentance, there being no Confideration beyond this: And tis impossible a Man should Sin with the very fame Thoughts, Convictions and Confiderations about him, as he has when he Repents. This I say is no more possible, than for a Ballance to move Two contrary ways with the fame Weight, and in the fame Posture. He therefore that Sins, wants that Confideration at least to keep him in his Duty, which when he Repents brings him to it; and is therefore Ignorant and Mistaken.

The Sum of this matter lies in this form of Argument, Whoever thinks Sin a leffer Evil; is mistaken in his Judgment; but whoever commits Sin, does then think it a leffer Evil: Therefore whoever commits Sin is mistaken in his Judgment. So great is the folly of Sin, both in reference to the Absurdity of the Choice, and to the Error and Mistake of the Chuser; and so great reason has every Singer to take up that Confession of the Pfalmist, so Foolish was I and Pfal. 73.

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Igno-

Ignorant, and even as a Beast before

And thus far of the Folly of Sin in general; I come now in the Second place to the other ground of the Charge, where I am to confider the folly of placing our Happiness and Content in the good things of this World, and of that particular fort of Earthly-Mindedness which we call Covetoninels. It is certainly a very great folly to place our Happiness in any Created Good, even in the very Best of the Works of God; there is nothing even in Heaven that's Created. which can be our Happiness; not the Discourses of Angels, not the Love of Seraphins, not the Mufick of Alleluiahs. And therefore the Pfalmift excludes all the Creatures even in Heaven as well as in Earth from being the Objects of his Happiness; Whom have I in Heaven but thee? fays he ; twould be a great folly therefore to make any Created Good our Happiness, even in the very Region of Bleffedness. But then to place it in any good that this World, this Sediment and Sink of the Creation can afford

Pfal. 73.

afford, is such a degree of Sottishness and Stupidity, as did not Experience convince us that there are such Fools, one would hardly think incident to a Rational Creature; for it plainly argues that we are grofly ignorant of one of these Two things, either of our selves, or of the things of the World; we are either ignorant of the Dignity and Excellency of our Natures, of the Designs and Ends of our Creation, and of the Strengths and Capacities of our Appetites which are to be satisfied with nothing less than Infinite; or if we do know and consider all this of our selves, then we are so much the more ignorant of the World about us, to think that there is any thing to be had in this Circle of Vanity to satisfy the importunity of fuch Hungry and Capacious Appetites.

So far indeed is any thing in this World from being able to afford us Happiness and Satisfaction, that tis well if it can give us Entertainment, and sweeten the otherwise insipid, and to some very bitter Draught of Life: The wisest Enquirer into the

Capacities of Nature will hardly allow it so much as that; but says of all here, that 'tis not only Wanity, but alfo Vexation of Spirit; and if we do, by an extraordinary Fortune meet with any thing in this World that can a little cool and allay the heat of our great Thirst, and refresh the drought of our Spirit, yet we are assured by our Saviour who well understood the World, though he enjoy'd but little Joh. 4.13. Of it, that who spewer drinks, of this Water shall thirst again; and we all find by repeated Experiences, that its so, and our Reason tells us it must be so, confidering the valt, the infinite difproportion between the best things of this World, yea of the whole Creation, and the largeness, the immensity of our Appentes and Capacities, which are a plain Demonstration that we were neither made for them, nor they for us, and that here is neither our Good nor our Evil.

And what a Folly then is it to place our Happines, and take up our Rest in such things as these against the Confession and experimental Verdict of the Wisest of Men, against the express

press Declaration and Affeveration of God who made both the World and us, and knows the exact Proportion that all his Works have to each other; and that a Barn full of Corn can the ver fatisfy the Hunger of a Soul gainst the united experience of all Men ever fince Adam, tray, and sgainst our own Experience too, which will withels to us. If we but ask ther. that we never enjoyed but were difapty when our Arms were full; hay, and against the Answer of bar Reason too, which satisfies us of the Necessity of what our Experience confelles to be time, and that as it has ever been to. To it ever will and mint be for I fay, what a delperate, incorrigible Fool must be be, who after ill this; will yet dream of a Heaven tibon Earth, and place His Happinels In the good of this World! The flort is, there is no Polly or Diappointment like that of being millakel in ohes End, and of all Ends hone is to foolishly militaken as our Last End, and this can never be more foolidaly militaken than when its placed in the things of this World. This therefore is a very great

great instance of Folly and Stupidity, and to him that is guilty of it, whatever he be for Wit and Parts in other Matters of lesser consequence, God justly may and will say, Thou Fool.

And now if there be so much of Folly in Centring in this World, which confifts of great variety of Good, and wherein there is a great Latitude of Enjoyment, what a Folly must it then be to straiten our Happiness within the narrow compass of One or Two of its meanest Objects, and to set up our Rest in a full Purse, or a full Barn, or in a few Acres of Ground! And this the Covetous Man does; though he be called a Worldly Man, yet 'tis not the World at large, but a little of it, and the worst of it that is the Mistress of his Heart: He is such a Fool to think that his very Life confifts in the Abundance of things which he possesses, and so he makes Gold his Hope, and fays to the Fine Gold, Thou art my Confidence. He places his End in these things, and so is guilty of all the common Folly and Absurdity of those who place their Happiness in any of the good things

things of this World; only there is this one peculiar aggravation on his Side, that whereas the Ambitions Man though he makes Honour and Preferment his Happiness, yet he enjoys, it when he has it; and so does the Volupeuary by his Pleasures; and by this means, though they lose their true End, yet they have fomething in Exe change. In the mean time, the Covetous Wretch, though he makes Wealth his End, yet he when he has it, enjoys it no more than he did when it lay hid in the Bowels of the Earth, and to goes to the Devil for nothing. For nothing did I fay? itis worse than so, for though he has nothing of the enjoyment , yet he won't bate himself an Ace of the Trouble, but endures all the Pain and Anxiety that Careful Days and Sleeples Nights can give, and fo has his Hell here, and hereafter too ames avening dainw

The truth is, there is more Depth and Mystery in the Folly of Covetous ness, than in any the most profound Wisdom in the World; other Follies of Human Life, though they are not to be Gored any more than this, yet S. 4

they may be accounted for y and though they do overpower and inflave the Mind, yet they do not baffle it. But this is a Difease that has such variety of uncertain Symptoms, that 'cis hard to know what cause to ascribe it to; the Theory of it is as difficult as the Oure, and we can only fay, that the Soul is not well under it, that its a Difeafe. 'Tis Folly enough one would think, for one Man to place his Hap-pinels in such a Trifle as a piece of fittering Dirt, and to have ones Soul dwell among Sacks of Corn, and Bags of Mony, and to be always craving, heaping, counting and admiring; this I say one would think were Nonfense enough, confidering the vileness of the Treasure it self. the Providence of God, the shormess and uncertainty of Life, the transitorines of this World, the fashion of which is always paffing away; and confidering withal the very little that Nature requires for her latisfaction. But yet it were fomething tolerable if the Wretch would but be perfus-ded to make use of what he has, and to enjoy like a Man, what he defires and admires like a Fool. But to fee

an old staking Misser among his Bags, like a Scare-Crow in a Field of Corn, to keep others away from what he has no power to make use of himself, to see him hovering and brooding over his Heaps, and bringing forth nothing; to see him dayly pay Rolligione Visits to his Manneon, and to have his Belly empty when his Coffers are full, sure the Philosopher that laught to see an As eat Thistles, might well split his Sides at such a Spectacle as this.

leaft orange in a man the time!

Then Fool! If thou doft not want fo much Wealth, why dost thou defire it, and take so much Pains to get it? And if then doft, why doft thou not use and enjoy it? But this is the monitrous Folly of the Covetous Wretch, he first desires absurdly, and then is more about in not enjoying what he delires the is every whit as Poor when he has as when he has not ; he is good to no body, but world of all to himfelf: In one word, he is a communal Torment to his own Mind, and a Laughing-freek to the World, whom he diverts with and manufacturally to and there

pineue

his Folly, the only thing wherein he is a Benefactor.

It were an infinite undertaking to expose to view the whole Absurdity of Covetousness, which is a World of Folly, as the Tongue is of Iniquity; only there is one notorious instance of it, which in justice to my Subject, I cannot well pass over: And that is, that it is a Vice of this peculiar Quality from all others, to be then most strong and prevailing, when there is least cause for it, and least Temptation to it; for them generally are Men most Covetous.

- When they have most Wealth
- wa. When they have least Time.
- 1. When they have most Wealth; this one would think should be the proper Cure of Covetousness, as a full Draught of Water is of Thirst; for this is what the Covetous Man desires, this is the Mistress of his Affections, and the delight of his Eyes; that which he has so long and so passionately wish'd for, and promised himself so much Happiness

piness in; and therefore when he is posses'd of this, one would expect that he should be satisfied, and at rest, as other Lovers are when they are come to the enjoyment of their Defires. But the case is so far otherwife, that he is more deeply plung'd in Covetousness now than ever, and is the more Empty for being Full; and there is nothing more common than to see Men who were of a frank and liberal Disposition when they had little or nothing to support them, to commence Covetous in an instant upon the Bequest of a rich Legacy, or the fuddain fall of an Estate. Strange, that Men should contract their Spirits upon the inlargement of their Fortunes! Many indeed are the Temptations and Snares of Wealth; but of all Vices one would think it should not dispose Men to Covetoufness, but rather be an Antidote against it: And yet so it is, Men are generally most inslaved to this Vice, when they have really leaft. Temptation to it, and might most eafily be above it . that is , when they have most Wealth. Which indeed is a more strange and unaccountable Appearance to confider, than either the Attraction nava

Attraction of the Loadstone, or the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea, and yet 'tis as strange to consider, that Meh are also most Covetous,

3. When they have least Time : Itideed when Men are in the Morning of Life, and have a long Profpect of many Years before them, they have theh fome Temperation to be Covetous, and fornething to plead for their being fo's for they may then live long enough to mjoy what by their Frugality they can get, and confidering the many Conwhat at prefent they enjoy. But when the Day of Life is far fpent, and the Night is at hand, when a Man has but hore Prospect before him, and his Sun is just ready to touch upon its great Horizon, then one would think he should have but little heart to be Covetous; and yet then is the time when Men are most of all fo; for Coverousness is the proper Vice, or rather Difease of Old Age, and is almost as constant an Attendant of it, as Grey Hairs, or a Trembling Hand. When all other Vices leave the Man, as no longer fit for their Service; when even

even Luft it felf, the last of the black Train has bid him adieu, then Covetousness seizes him, as if it deligned to have him wholly to itself, without Partner or Competitor, to domineer over him with an absolute Tyranny. Strange, they a Man should be most solicitous for Provision by the way, when he is almost at his Journeys end, within view of Home Thou Fool! If thou must be Covetous, take a proper Condition, and a right Time for it, and be fo either when thou art Poor, or when thou are Toung 5 when thou halt a Temperation to it, and a Pretence for it. But it feems Absurdity, and Nonsense is fo far of the very Essence of this Myferious Vice, that then Mon are most addicted to it, when in all Reafon and Expediation they should be Proof against it; nay, one would think even naturally uncapable of in when they are Rich, and when they are Old

And now I think there is sufficient, ground for the Charge wherewith God taxes the Rich Man; he might well be called Fool; as a Sinner, as

an Earthly minded Person, and particularly as being Coverous. But let us now consider the particular Circum-flances of his Covetousness, and we shall find that his Folly was of a nature very Extraordinary; the Text says, that the Ground of a certain Rich Man brought forth plentifully; now twould be expected, that upon this, his very next Thought should be to return God Thanks for the Fruitful-nels of his Ground, if it were for no other Reason, but that he might have the like Success again the next Season: No, but instead of that, he immediately thought within himself what he should do, because he had no room where to beltow his Fruits; there was the first Instance of his Folly. Well, but in case this unseasonable and too early thoughtfulness of his had but put him upon doing some good thing with his Abundance, 'twould have been pretty tolerable yet, and there would have been some amends for the ill-timing it, before he had returned his Thanks to God: No, but he thought thus within himself, I will pull down my Barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my Fruits and

and my Goods: All my Fruits and my Goods; he deligns you fee to ingross all to himself, and to remember neither God nor the Poor, to let no part of it go to any Pious or Charitable use; and there's another infrance of his Folly. But after all, perhaps he does not mean to place his End and chief Happines in his full Granary, but only to use it as a leffer good, and as relating to the Conveniences of the Body, and the gratification of the Animal Life: No, but his Folly proceeds further than fo, I will fay to my Soul, fays he, Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, Eat, Drink, and be Merry: A very noble Soliloguy indeed ! That ever a Man should be so much a Brute and a Sot, as to make a full Barn the good of his Soul! of his Soul who must feek her Happiness from the same Hand whence the had her Being, and can be fatisfied only by him who is Absolute Perfection. This certainly was a strange extravagance of Folly, and yet even this has a further Aggravation yet; for had this Provision of his been indeed for many Tears, (as he fancied,) there would have been 0000000 more

more Caufe and Pretence for the great Completency and Satisfaction he took in it. But little did the poor Fool think upon what Contingencies this Project of his depended, and how precarious and uncentain the Leafe of his Life was, much lefs that that very Night his Soul should be required of him and yet this was a very obvious Confideration, though in the heat and hurry of his Contrivances he was not at leifure to take it in his way. And this is the lamentable Fate of all Covetous Men, they are so busie in making hast to be Rich, that they menlook the Grave, notwithstanding that they are continually poring upon the Earth. But not to confider a thing fo obvious, is a great piece of dotifiness and stupidity; and yet to confider it, and go on in heaping up Riches without Reason and without End, is much worke

And shus have we seen the whole procedure of the Rich Man, (if he may now be allowed that Name,) and the incomparable Folly of it, and in him the Folly of all Covetous Persons, who yet in one respect, do generally exceed

exceed their Original in the Parable, for he, though he had religned up his Heart and Soul to his Wealth, yet he was to wife as to know when he had enough, and when twas time to give over, retreat, and take his Eafe. But our Mifers never know when they have fufficient, but drudge on to the very last Minute, and Dye in their Slavery; and are therefore the greater Fools.

What therefore remains, but that we take other Measures of Wisdom, and other Objects of Content; that we place not our Happiness in the things of this World, nor labour for that which is not Bread; that we lay not up Treasures for our selves upon Earth, but rather endeavour to be Rich towards God; that we do not plunge our felves so deep into the World, and the Pleafures of this Life, this short Life, as to forget the days of Darkness which shall be many? Above all, let us take care that we do not take any thing of the World to be the good of our Souls, much less so far as for the sake of any Honour, Profit or Preferment to be false to the infinitely dearer Interest

Interest of our Religion, and the Cause of God and his Church; lest when we begin to Pride and Applaud our Selves in our Wildom, and withal fancy that even Posterity shall praise our Saying, God in the mean time should say to any of us as he did to the Rich Man in our Parable, Thou Fool.

very last Minute, and Dye in their

hat therefore remains, but that we the other Measures of Williams and dier Objects of Contest ; that we place the World, nor labour for that which a rot Bread; that we law not up caforestor our elects upon Barth, but Meher endeavour to be Rich towards God; that wo do not plunge our felves. to deep the the World, and the Pleas. force of this Life, this thore life, as to greet the days of Darkness which the many? Above all, for ostake care that we do not take any thing of the World to be the good of othe Hale, much lets to far asser the falso of other Honour. Profit or Packs medic Or be fidle to the infinitely degree. Dereil

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## DISCOURSE AND THE PROBLEM TO BE TO B

CONCERNING

The Consideration of God, and of the Divine Presence.

add, Fereits of God, to whom he he

be more in 9. 1619 and being

I have set the Lord always before me.

ND twere Happy we could all do so; we should then certainly be more Pure and Uncorrupt in our Thoughts and Intentions, more Spiritual and Elevated in our Affections, and more T 2 Orderly

Orderly and Regular in our Actions whether in our Retirements, or upon the open Stage; we should demean our selves with more care and exactness both towards God, our Neighbour and our Selves; we should lead our Lives with more Innocence, and leave them with more Courage and Chearfulness than we generally do.

The Words, as indeed the whole Psalm, seem immediately to concern the Person and the Condition of Christ, and to be chiefly intended to express that freedly confiant and adrual Confideration which he had of the Power and Veracity of God, to whom he was not fo intimately and mysteriously united, but that he endeavoured to be more intimate and familiar with him, and if possible, to place him is a nearer view, by the arts of Attention and Recollection, by the most actual and awaken'd application of Mind. This, as we have great reafon to think, was his constant Pra-Dice and Exercise all his Life long, but especially about that dark and Cloudy Period of it, when he was entring into the Troubles of his Paffion:

fion: Them he had occasion to make use of all the Aids and Succours bash of Reafon band, Grace Barpatricularly to renew and reinforce his Confiden rations of the Power and Veracity of God, that he would not leave his Soul in Hellis (in the State of Separation from his Body; ) non fuffer his Holy One to fee Gormptions Then thene fore he fet himself more industrious ly to Contemplate the Perfections of God, especially those of his Power and Veracity and from hence he drew Arguments of Confolation for his Support, under all the Hemors and Af flictions of his great Agony, I have fet God ulways before the 3 because As is at my Bight Hamb, mil fall not be riety, even as much as there is bound

But I shall discourse upon the Words with greater Latitude, and in treating of them, shall concern my self about these Two things.

First, To shew what it is to set God always before one; or how many ways we may be said to set God before us.

Secondly, To represent the many and great Advantages arising from Each;

eachs

each 3 and what an Excellent Art, and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to fet God always before us.

Now as to the First, to fet God always before us, is in the general to have him ever present in our Thoughts and Meditations, under fome Capacity of Confideration of other; prefent to our Thoughts not by way of Effence only of for that he necessarily 187 and we cannot possibly exclude him thence,) but also by way of Object, when we attend to him, and reflect upon him under some Qualification or other, either absolute, or in relation to us: And in this there is great variety, even as much as there is in the several Attributes and Perfections of God; but I shall consider only those that influence our Practice, and ferve to the Direction of our Manners. Now in relation to this, there are Three very excellent ways of letting God before us, as the Supream Good, as a Pattern, and as an Obferver. Scoundly; To represent the many

mon guine respondent a rong First,

if, come l'are and Right, whereby the

First, We may set God before us as the Supream Good; this we do when we Contemplate the natural and abfolute Perfection of his Effence, that univerfal Plenitude of his, whereby he contains all that is Good, Lovely and Excellent, all things that are requifice to the compleating of a most perfect and Sovereign Being, that may be infinitely and unchangably Happy in himfelf, and whereby he may be come apristo be the greatest Good to his Creatures of the street End of Man, the Object of his Happinels, and the laft Centre of all his Delires? This is to fee God before us as the Supream Good. W. bood mesages or Bad, without any Partiality or

Secondly, We may fee God before us as a Patternis this we do when we Contemplate the Mond Name of God. those imitable Perfections of his, which answer to those Vertues and good Dil politions of Mind which he requires from us, and which he contributes at fo to work in us bywhen Graces of his Spirit : "Such are that univerfal Sandity and Holine's off his Nature and Will, whereby all his Actions be

come

37.

Pfal. 145. come Pure and Right, whereby the Lord is Righteons in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works. His Goodnefs, wherein are comprehended all the Heights and Depths, and the whole Length and Breadth of the Love, the Kindels, the Mercy, the Grace, the Benignity and Bounty of God, that infinite diffusiveness of his Nature, whereby he is as it were chried out of and beyond himfelf, to Communicate the good that is in him to his Creatures according to their feveral Proportions, and Capacities. His Jufifes whereby he deals uprightly and equally with all his Greatures, and renders to every one his own, acto their Works, mGood cording Bad, without any Partiality or respect of Persons His Truth, whereby, all his Revelations are exactly correspondent and conformable First to his own Mind, and then to the Nature of the things themselves, for thet he can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His Faithfulness, whereby he most affuredly performs whatever her has Promiled or Threatned; but more el pecially is his Eaithfulness remarked in Scripture si for the Performance of his 1come

his Promises, there being a Right acquired from thefe by the Persons to whom they are made, which is not in Threatnings; and accordingly 'twould be a greater breach of Fidelity, to deny the one, than not to execute the other. And therefore the Scripture commending the Faithfulness of God, reftrains it chiefly to his Promifes; according to that of the Author to the Hebrems, He is Faithful that has Heb. 10. Promised. Lastly, when we Contem-123. plate his Sincerity which confilts in his candid, open and ingenuous, dealing with the Sons of Men, in that he never thinks nor deligns any thing contrary to what he Rieveals , wither by Word or Deed, in opposition to all Tricks Juglings, Double-dealings, Hypocrific and the like of spinissino being willing rather to Suppose than

These are those Vertues and Perfections which constitute the Morel Nature of God, and when we propose these duly and sincerely to our Medication, as they are Encellencies in the Divine Nature, we may be then said to set God before in as a Patern Lay as they are Encellencies in the Divine Nature, otherwise the formality

mality of the thing will be changed? For if, for instance, I consider the Juffice of God, not as 'tis a Moral Excellence in him; but only as an Instrument of Evil to my self, I do not then set God before me as a Pattern, but as an Avenger.

authinues of bod,

The Third and Last way of setting God before us, is as an Observer; when we confider him as a Being Effentially present in all Places, and with all Creatures, who all live, move and have their Being in him, and beyond all Places and Creatures too, in those infinite Spaces where he can erect new Worlds, but where as yet there is nothing belides himfelf. I shall not here enter into a nice Disquisition concerning the Omnipresence of God, being willing rather to Suppose than Dispute it. But however, left this way of fetting God before us, should be thought Imaginary and Precarious, give me leave by the way only to remark; that 'tis every whit as real fonable to think the Effence of God to be every where, as to be always, and that Immensity is as rational as Etermity: That Great and Stupendons Bemality ing,

ing, who is allowed to reach through all Times, may as well be allow'd to reach through all Places; nay much rather, fince it feems to be a less Perfection to be every where, than to be always. For to be always in Duration, is fuch an intrinsical Denomination, as fprings from the greatest of all God's natural Perfections ; for it arises from the necessity of his Existence, whereby he cannot but be, which is the highest degree of Being, as being directly opposite to not Being, and confequently of Perfection. But now to be every whereho feems rather an extrinsical Denomination relating to somewhat without, and such as is not directly contrary to not Being, but only to limited Being, And if we afcribe the Greater to God, why should there be any Controversy de A about the Lefs? Taking therefore the Supposition for granted, we may well confider God as a Being every where Effentially prefent and confequently as an All-feeing and All-knowing Beling, to whom all Hearts are open, and all Defires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; and not only as an idle Observer, but as one that takes

nizarec of what he fees and knows, as to treasure and feal in up against the Day of Retribution; and to Punish or Reward us accordingly.

These I take to be the several ways of setting God before us, so as to reap any Spiritual advantage from it: I come now in the Second place to represent the many and great advantages arising from each, and what an excellent Art and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to set God always before us; and truly the advantages are very great; for as the Habitual Knowledge of God, and the Belief of his Existence; are the first and general Foundations of all Religion, according to that of the Apostle, the that cometh to God, mast believe that be in and that he

Reb. 11.6. the Apolde, He that cometh to God, mast believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. So the actual Consideration of him under these Capacities, is highly conducive to the Promotion and Accomplishment of all Holiness and Verraes.

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For First, to begin with choic advantages that naturally foring from the Confideration of God as the Supream Good, what can be more excollent than the Love of God? Tis the highest Elevation of a Greature, and withal the most pregnant and comprehensive of all the virtuous Dif positions he is capable of: Tis like the Flower or Blossom of a Plant, which contains all in it, and therefore our Saviour calls it the First and Mat. 22.38. the Great Commandment. But now what more effectual means can there be next to the Grace of him who is Effential Love, and who, as the Apostle tells us, sheds the Love of God Rom. 5.5. abroad in our Hearts 3 I fay, what more effectual means can there be to kindle. increase, and keep alive in us this Heavenly and Divine Fire, than to let God always before us as the Supream Good ? Can a Man confider any thing barely as Good, and not love it, when Love it felf is nothing elfe but an Inclination of the Soul co Good? He may indeed not proceed to chuse it, because it may come into competition with a greater, which when

when it does, not the good, but the absence of it is to be Chosen, as being the leffer Evil; but yet notwithstanding, he must still love it with a natural Love, as long as he confiders it as in any degree good. Much less then can a Man refuse to love God. when he considers him not only as Good, but as the Supream Good. For here, besides that natural inclination which necessarily follows upon the appearance of Good as Good, there is this peculiar to be confidered, that there is no room for Competition with a greater Good, and accordingly that natural Love and Inclination which is due to God as Good, must needs pass into act and effectual Choice, upon the confideration of his being the Supream Good. The least degree of Love or Inclination must needs be actual and effectual, when it has nothing to outweigh it, as the least Weight weighs down the Scale where there is no contrary weight to counterballance and over-rule it. He therefore that fets God always before him as the Supream Good, and never thinks of him but under that Notion, must necessarily and effectually love him.

him, as he that looks upon Sin as the greatest of all Evils, must necessarily and effectually hate it: For the Beauties of God are infinitely Charming and Attractive in themselves, and there wants nothing but our ferious and due Attention to make them become fo to us; and the more we apply our Attention to them, the more we shall be in love with them. What is it that makes the Seraphin burn and flame above the rest of the Angelical Orders, but because they see more of the First and Supream Beauty? Now as Love depends upon Vision in the other Life, so does it upon Contemplation in this and confequently he that confiders the infinite Perfection of God most, must necessarily love him most. Contemplation is the most proper and genuine incentive of Love wherever the Object is truly deferving of it, as discovering to us the reasons why it ought to be loved: I fay, where the Object is truly deferving of our Love; for otherwise it will ferve only to discover its Vanity, and so lessen its amiableness; which is the reason that the best way to cure our Love to the World, is thoroughly Creating

thoroughly to confider it. But in cafe the Object be a true and real Good, and fuch as will abide the Test of Meditation, and endure to be weighed and handled on both fides, the proper way to beget and increase our Love toward such an Object as this, is fludiously to Contemplate it 3 and then the Light that is in our Under-Amdings, will beget a warmth in our Wills and Affections. Experience as well as Reason may inform us, that the way to love any thing that is truly good, and will hear a near in-spection, is to look much upon it, and confider it thoroughly, fince even the most indifferent Objects by long stay and dwelling upon them, do by de-grees so gam upon our Affections, that we come at last to have a kind of a fancy and a kindness for them; and many have gazed and stared up-on an ordinary Face so long, till they have entertained a more than ordinary Passion. And if the mean-est Beauty of the Creature by frequent and familiar interviews, becomes at length fo Lovely and Charming, how much more shall the continual Meditation upon the Beauty of the Creator

Creator, kindle in us a Love towards him, and a Delight in him ! The longer certainly we fit thus under his Shadow, the more we shall delight to do fo, and his Fruit will be the Cant. 2. 3. more sweet to our Taste. And if the general Confideration of God has such influence upon our Love of him, how much stronger will that influence be, when we fet him before us under the Notion and Capacity of the Supream Good! And therefore when the Pfalmist in a deep Contemplation of the Beauties of Christ, had proceeded fo far as to conclude him fairer than the Children of Men; as if wounded to the Heart with the Rays of his Divine Beauty, he prefently adds, Thy Arrows are very Pfal 45. Sharp.

They are indeed Lord Jesus, they are very Sharp and Keen, like the Sword that proceeds out of thy Mouth; and how is it that we can resist the Power of thy Sovereign Beauty! Thou woundest the Seraphin and Cherubin, and all the Orders of Angels with the Arrows of thy Love, and they burn at the Rays of thy Divine

Divine Light and Glory: Whom have then in Heaven but thee, and what is there on Earth that they defire in comparison of thee? But we who are every day vanquished and led in triumph by Meaner Beauties, stand yet proof against thy Diviner Charms, and feel none of the impressions of thy Love. But 'tis our Blindness that is our Defence, and our unattention is the Shield that repels thy Darts: We do not Contemplate thee as thy Angels do, nor as we our selves do the Beauties of this Sensible World. Oh do thou then open and fix our Eyes upon thee, and they will foon receive in thy Divine Rays; engage but our Minds to Contemplate thee. and then we shall not chuse but love thee.

Nor is this the only advantage of fetting God before us as the Supream Good; for as this is a confideration of excellent use to excite and quicken in us the Love of God, so does it also Secondly, contribute both to convince us of the Worlds Vanity, and to support us under that Conviction. He that is not sensible of the vanity

Series .

vanity of Created Good, had need present God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, that he may have a right sense and apprehension of it; and he that is, had need Meditate upon God under the fame notion, that he may have wherewithal to support his Mind under such a Conviction; and this way of fetting God before us, is a very effectual means to do both. The vanity of the Creature never appears with that advantage of clearness and conviction. as when we Contemplate the Fullness and Excellency of the Creator, which presently weakens and puts out all the Luster of the World, as the Sun does that of a Candle, meerly by out-shining it. And when a Man by the help of this Contemplation is arrived to this sense and conviction, the fame will also serve to support him under it. 'Tis supposed here, that the Man will then stand in great need of some Support or other, and that very justly; for the Soul of Man being not her own End and Good, must needs rely on something without for her Happiness, and as long as the thinks that this may be found a-II 2 mong

mong the Creatures, the is pretty well satisfied and at ease. But no sooner is she awakened out of this pleasing Dream, into a Conviction of the World's Vanity, but she has lost her hold, has nothing to enjoy, nothing to rest upon; and what a barren disconsolate condition must the be then in unless she has some other Refuge to retreat to for her Support? And what other Support can there or need there be, but the Confideration of the Divine Fullness and Greatness, which will make abundant Supply for all the Deficiency that is in the Creature, were it infinitely more vain than it is, and so relieve that Conviction which it has occafioned: Was assisted by A and Supplied to

But Thirdly, This is also a general Remedy against all other Trouble and Sadness, as well as against that which arises from the Conviction of the World's Vanity; the best Contolation of an Afflicted Mind, is to think upon God, this will chear and refresh the Soul, when Rational Discourses and Wise Sentences are applied in vain; for if your Sorrow proceed

the belong this Contemplation is are

ceed from Fear, what more proper relief than to Meditate upon the Power of God, who is able to deliver us from the worst of Evils? If from Love or Defire, what better allay can be found than to Contemplate the Perfection of God, who is able to fatisfy our most Craving Appetites? If from Distrust or Despair, what can we do better than Meditate upon the Goodness and Faithfulness of God, who loves whatever he has made, knows our frame, and confiders that we are but Duft? If from the confideration of the ill state of Mankind, either as to Sin or Mifery, how can we fatisfy our felves better than by Meditating upon the excellent order and conduct of the Providence of God, who governs the World in a way becoming his infinite Perfections, and disposes all things fweetly. And so in like manner in all other instances, whatever be the occasion of our Trouble and Sadness. no Consolation like Meditating upon God, and setting him before us: It is so if we think upon him at large, but more especially if we contemplate him as the Supream Good. This is a more U 3 mmeimmediate and direct remedy against all Sorrow; for Good is directly contrary to Evil, and the Sense of Good will counterpoise the Sense of Evil, if it be an equal good; and if it be a greater, it will overcome and swalit up, nay and leave some dgrees of pure Happiness behind, so that the Man shall rather enjoy than Suffer. But now 'tis impossible for a Man to represent God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, as his proper End and Happiness, without a strong sense of his Goodness and Perfection; he must in a great measure taste and feel that Good which he Contemplates, and even this Obscurer Vision of God is in some degree Beatifick. And what grief or fadness of Mind then is there which this strong sense and taste of God will not overcome, and which will not be quite disfolved, swallowed up and lost in the Contemplation of the Supream good? Upon which Confiderations well might the Pfalmist

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think upon God. He might have thought
upon his Royal Greatness, and the
pomp and Magnificence of his Court,
or upon his Riches, or upon his Friends,

or upon his Victories and Triumphs; or if none of these would do, he might have taken his Harp into his Hand, and have driven away the Evil Spirit of Melancholy by Musick from himself, as he did before from Saul: But he had a better expedient than all this, When I am in Heaviness I will think upon God.

Nor is this all; for should we not also upon the strength of this Consideration despise and disrelish all those vain Pleasures which betray us into Sin? Should we not be above the Temptations of either Honour, Pleafure or Profit? Should we not be fecure from that Foolish Exchange which those that pass for the Wifest among us frequently make, I mean that of gaining the World, and lofing on's own Soul? Laftly, should we not endeavour by all Means possible to qualify our felves for the bleffed Enjoyment of this Supream Good, and in order to that, to cleanse our felves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to Purify our felves as he is Pure? Yes, we should; the Love of God would eafily constrain

us to all this, and the serious application of our Minds to the Infinity of the Divine Persection, would as easily constrain us to the Love of God.

And so much for the advantages of fetting God always before us as the Supream Good; let us now consider in the Second Place how we may be advantaged by setting him before us as a Pattern. We all know and feel the great force and power of Example, and how naturally disposed Men are to Imitation, and that we are much the better or the worse for those with whom we Converse: And there is this great difference between Example and a Rule, that a Rule only directs, but Example does also incline; a Rule instructs the Judgment, but Example moves and reconciles the Affections; the former shews us the right Point to which we are to steer, but the latter supplies us also with Wind and Sail. And there is no reason to doubt. but that the Example of God would be as prevailing with us, as any other, and much more, (as being of infinitely

nitely greater Authority,) if we did but equally propose him to our imitation, and fet him before us as a Pattern. Can then a Man confider the Universal Sanctity of the Divine Nature, and not find himself strongly inclined to work over anew the defaced Image of his Creator, and to be Holy as he is Holy? St. John assigns this for a Reason why we shall be like God hereafter, because we shall see him as he is ; We shall be I Joh 3.12, like him, fays he, for we shall see him as he is. And if the clear and open Vision of God will so far assimilate us as to make us perfectly conformable to him, certainly the Contemplation of his Moral Perfections. though through a Glass darkly, must needs inspire us with Desires and Endeavours to be like him. Is it then possible for a Man seriously and constantly to contemplate the infinite Love, Bounty and Goodness of God. and either be ungrateful to him, or uncharitable to his Neighbour, to be felfish and strait-laced, niggardly and covetous, referved and uncommunicative? Much less can he be envious and spiteful, cruel and unmerciful, and

and delight in Barbarity and doing Mischief; it would be a Miracle if he should. The Plalmist thought it PGL 52.1. fo, and therefore fays he, Why Boaftest thou thy self thon Tyrant, that thou canst do Mischief, whereas the Goodness of God endureth yet daily? He thought it strange that any Man should value himself for being able to do Mischief, when God thought it his Glory to do Good : He might have reproved his Folly and Wickedness from the very nature of the thing, by laying open the great unreasonableness of it, but he chose rather to convince him of the strangeness and absurdity of such a temper, from the Consideration of the Divine Goodness.

Which before I leave, I shall mention one more very excellent advantage which it has in the Practice of Religion, in that it is apt to remove from us all servile fear, and to inspirit us with a generous and ingenuous Principle of serving God. For all Slavish and Superstitious Fears of God proceed from a wrong notion

of him; we Fear him, and are Jealous of him, because we misar prehend him; and we misapprehend him, because we do not sufficiently contemplate him. The way therefore to be afraid of him less, is to be more Conversant, and better acquainted with him. When the Disciples faw Jesus walking upon the Sea, and knew not who it was, they were scared with the Appearance; and therefore our Lord to take off their Fear, only made himself better known to them. It is I, says he, be not afraid. 'Twas enough to dismiss their Fears to let them know who he was. Nor need we at any time any other Remedy against servile Apprehenfions, and difingenuous Fears of God, than barely to contemplate the Goodness and Benignity of his Nature, expressed in those two Emphatical Descriptions given of him in Scripture, God is Love, and God is Light.

And thus 'twere easie to give instances throughout all the other Moral Perfections of God; but I shall insist only upon one more, as being more

more particularly fit and useful to be confidered in the Age we now live in. Can then a Man duly contemplate the Truth and Sincerity of God, how candid, open and ingenuous he is in his dealings with the Sons of Men, and how far removed from all Tricks, Juggles and Deceits, and that he can no more deceive, than he can be deceived? Can a Man I say confider this, confider it well, and be a Hypocrite? And that not only in an instance or two, but in a long series of Action; not only for a few Hours or Days, but for a course of several Years; not only in the common concerns of Life, but in the most sacred of all things, and where we owe the tee greatest plainness and Sincerity both to God and Man, Religion. Is Charity itself able to believe that fuch a Mysterious Intricate Sinner as this, has made the Sincerity and Truth of God any part of his Meditations? No, I fear if the truth were known, fuch a one would be too much concerned in that Charge, wherewith the Pfalmist taxes the Proud Man, that God is not in all his Thoughts, that he does not think of him at all,

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or else that he has a wrong notion of him, and takes him to be altogether such a one as himself: But let such a one know, that God will reprove him, and set before him the things which he has done; for God does not only give us a Pattern of Truth and Sincerity; but does also strictly observe whether we follow it or no: Which leads me to consider in the last place the advantage of setting God always before us as an Observer.

dy defectly deliver the Political factor 'Tis most certain, whether we will consider it or no, that God is every where Essentially and Substantially Present, and that as there is no Place that includes him, so there is none that excludes him; a notion of God fo very natural, that even the Jews. as groß and unmeraphylical as they were, could not but imbrace it. Which was the occasion of that Custom of theirs in their Sacrifices, (taken notice of by Dr. Outram out of Maimo- De Sacrinides,) of waving the Victim towards fisiis. Lib.1. the Six Parts of the World, upwards and downwards, East, West, North and South, whereby to express the ConfeConfecration of the Sacrifice to God as every where Present, and possessing all Places.

Heb. 4.13.

Tis also most certain, whether we will confider it or no, that God fees and knows all things, and that (as the Author to the Hebrews expresses it, ) there is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, and that all things are naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do. This we have most magnificently described by the Psalmist in the 139 Pfalm, O Lord thou haft fearched me out, and known me; thou knowest my down-fitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts long before. Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed, and spiest out all my ways: For lo there is not a word in my Tongue, but thou O Lord knowest it altogether. And again, whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there, if I go down to Hell thou art there also. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the Seu, even there also (hall thy Hand lead me,

and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say peradventure the Darkness shall cover me, then shall my Night be turned into Day. Yea, the Darkness is no Darkness with thee, but the Night is as clear as the Day, the Darkness and Light to thee are both alike.

Why now this we all know, and if formally put to the Question, shall be ready to confess it; for I am willing to suppose, that there are scarce any that are either Ignorant or Impudent enough to fay with the Atheistical Person in Job, How does God Job 22.13. know, can be judge through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him that he sees not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven. No, we know the contrary well enough, that God is present every where, and sees and knows every thing, but the Mifery of it is we don't confider it; and 'tis for want of actually thinking upon what we habitually know that the World is ruined. 'Tis this that makes so great a difference between the Behaviour and Conversation of one Man and another. All believe Omnipresence and Omniscience to be Per-

Perfections belonging to the infiniteness of the Divine Essence; but one maintains actual thoughts and recollections of this, and another does not; one has it lying dormant in him, as a general Notion or Theory, which he can talk and Discourse of now and then when occcasion is offered, and the other has it always actually present before him in its full Light and Conviction. Whence it comes to pass, that though both agree in the general belief of the Article, yet because one attends to it, and the other does not; the way of their Conversation is altogether different, and one lives as an Angel, and the other as a Devil.

For indeed were this one Confideration sufficiently heeded and attended to, it were enough of it self to regulate the conduct of Mens Actions, and to reduce the whole World into a true order and exactness of Living. There are indeed many excellent Methods of obtaining Vertuous and Religious Dispositions of Mind, and of improvement in them, but none that I can think of so advantagious

tagious as this: That which comes nearest to it, is the Mediation of Death; but indeed this comes too near to be reckoned as another, it being rather a further instance and improvement of the fame. For the Meditation of Death is only fo far influential upon our Lives, as 'tis a nearer and Stricter way of confidering the Divine Presence, before which we shall be more immediately prefented by Death. So that the Meditation of Death, (as far as it has any influence upon good Living) is comprehended under the Confideration of the Divine Presence, as a Particular under a General ; as indeed whatever is good in any other method of Holy Living, is after a manner Comprehended in this which of all others is the most Comprehenfive and Compendious. Which was the ground of that Admenition of God to Abraham, I am the Almighty Gen. 17. God, walk before me, and be thou Perfett: Where he supposes such a Connexion between the constant Attention to the Divine Presence and Perfection, that to attain the latter, a Man need only practife the former. God

God in giving Abraham this Direction for a Holy and a Perfect Life, gave him all ; for this fingle Exercice of Meditating upon the Presence of God, will either incline a Man both to the Defire and to the Practice of all other Spiritual methods and helps of Holy Living ; or elfe it will supply the room of them. So that if a Man who defires to advance in Spiritual Life, should happen to forget any of the other methods of the Spirit, let him only remember this one, and duly use and exercise it, and he shall either by this bring the rest to his Mind, or find no necessity of fo doing. This therefore may well be reckoned as the Head and Chief of all Spiritual Exercises; for indeed this one Exercise draws such a train of advantages after it, as by the affiltance of Divine Grace will be fufficient to perfect the Man of God. and complear the Christian. the first of the second

But to be a little more distinct, the advantagiousness of this Practice may appear in a double respect.

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Married will should whom have Eight,

First, As it is a general Countercharm against all Sin.

Secondly, As it is a general Incitement to all that is good.

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First . It is a general Counter-charm against all Sin; for as Sin in its formality is an Aversion from God, fo the cause of all Sin does at last resolve into Forgetsulness of him, and a Non-consideration of his Prefence and Inspection: There is an Aversion from him in our Understandings before there is any in our Wills, and the latter is the effect of the former. The Scripture reprefents Cain as going out from the Pre- Gen. 4.16. sence of God, after he had sinned; but its as true also that he went out before; for had he not first cast off the thoughts of Gods Presence, tis impossible that he should have sin-ned. And the same may truly be faid of all other Sinners, they first depart from God in their Thoughts, X 2 and

and then in their Actions; first forget bis Presence, and then their own Dwy: For can we conceive any Man fo stupid and hardy as to com-mit Sin, when at the same time he achially reflects upon a Being of In-finite Holinels, Power and Julice, looking upon him, and upon what he does? Could we suppose God to appear visibly to us when we were in Private, this we must needs were in Private, this we must needs grant would strike us with Serious and Reverent Apprehensions, and that we should stand in ane, and not Sin, though in the very hear and full Carier of a Temptation. And why should not God's seeing us, have the same influence upon us, as Our seeing God? Without question it would, and a great deal more, if we had but the same lively sense of it, and were equally awake and attentive to it; for we see that infinitely less than this will restrain us from Sin; the Eye of the World. from Sin; the Eye of the World, nay of one fingle Person, though an Inserior, though a Slave, though a Fool, though a Child: Nay, even the very Eye of the Sun, which very often puts the Sinner out of Countenance, and makes him defer his Folly till the Shades of Night And shall not the Presence of the Great God be as prevalent with us as any of thefe, especially considering that no Creature can be fo inwardly present with us as the Creator and that no Observation is of such importance and confequence as his? Shall not then his Presence and Inspection be as strong a Preservative against Sin, as the Presence of a Man? Without doubt it would, and infinitely more; did we but equally confider it; it would then fecure us not only from Sin, but oven from Temptation too, and keep us out out of Danger, as well as in Innocence. For how can he be tempted to Sin, who dwells always in the Presence of his Creator and Judge it Why are the Angels and the Souls of Jult Men made Perfect, fecure from the danger of Sinning, but only because they are always in the open Presence of God, and dwell in the Light of his Countenance? This is their great Prefervative X 3

tive above, and the fame if well attended to, would be a Prefervative to us below. The Perseverance of the Angels in Heaven is owing to their always beholding the Prefence of God there; and if we could do the fame here in proportion, that is, if our Contemplation were but as actual, steddy, and uninterrupted as their Vision, we should be as Confirmed and Established as they. In short, notwithstanding the great Corruption of our Nature, and our Pronenels to Evil, we need no other Guard, either against Sin, or against Temptation, than these Three Words well confidered, God is Prefent. Jan. 1 and mentage of the of the an and them, easy represent the time they be

But there is One particular Sin to which this Confideration is utterly irreconcilable, and against which it is a peculiar Antidote, and that is the Sin of Hypocrifie; this is a Sin which of all others proceeds most upon the Supposition of God's not being privy to our Thoughts and Intentions, and his not having a thorough Comprehensive Knowledge of

of all things: As the Fool fays in his Heart there is no God, fo the Hypocrite fays in his Heart, that if there be, yet he is no Observer, as being neither Omnipresent, nor Omniscient: Which Attributes of God whoever feriously Contemplates, must needs have his Antidote against this Vice. For to what purpose should a Man play the Hypocrite before him, who can discern the Fraud and Rottenness of the Proud Pharifee under his broad Phylactery, and the ravenous Covetouineis of the Precife Sectary under his long Prayer? No, as the Hypocrite takes care to avoid open Immoralities, because they are visible to the Eye of the World; fo. had he a due Sense of the Divine Presence and Observation, he would be every whit as careful to be without all inward Impurities, because they are Visible to the Eye of God. 

Secondly, This Practice is also a
general Incitement to all that is good;
As the Supposition of Gods Omnipresence and Omniscience is the FounX 4 dation

dation of all Religion; (for to what purpose should we make Religious Addresses to a Being that is either afar off, or unconfcious of our Behaviour towards him, ) fo the constant and actual impression of it would greatly promote the Practice of all Religion, Walk before me, and be they Perfect ! How can he be Perfect that does not walk with and before God, and how can he be otherwise that does? The actual Thoughts of the Presence of God is the very Life and Spirit of all Religion without which we should be quickly weary of well-doing, and with which we shall be so far from flagging in our Duty, that we shall be always endeavouring to do better and better, that fo we may the more approve our Selves and our Actions to our All-prefent and All-feeing Judge. This was the Principle into which David resolved all the Perfection and Integrity of his Obedience, that he acted as in the Sight and Prefence of his Judge. I have PGI. 119. Kept thy Commandments and Testimo-nies, for all my Ways are before thee. and Mark And

And no doubt if we acted by the fame Principle, we should live with the fame exactness if we lived under a constant sense of the Presence of God as he did, we should also with him have respect to all his Commandments When the Glorious Presence of God appeared to the Ifraelites upon Mount Sinai, we find that they were fo fenfibly affected with that terrible Sight, as to take up earnest Resolutions of Obedience; for all the People enfwered Moles, reporting the Words of God to them, with one Voice, and faid, All the Words which the Lord bath faid will we do. And as long as this Presence of God continued, we don't find but that they were very Orderly and Obedient, and contained themselves within those Boundaries which Mofes by Divine Order had fet about the Mount: And there is no question to be made, but that if they could still have maintained a fresh and lively Idea of this great Presence in their Minds, they would also have re-Spirit, sanswi

Spirit and would have contained themselves within all other Bounds of God's fetting, as well as those of Mount Sinai : their Heart would have been whole with him, and they would have continued stedfast in his Covenant. We may therefore, and without Censure conclude, that those who take liberty to break through the Bounds which God has fet, by transgressing those excellent Laws which he has given for the good Order and happy Being of Mankind, are not duly fenfible of the Divine Presence and Observation: They may know it in- . deed Habitually as a meer Point of Speculation, but they do not actually weigh and confider it, and have reason to say in the Words of the Patriarch when awakened from Sleep, Surely God was in this Place, and I

knew it not

And now fince the Spiritual Advantages of fetting God always before us are so great and so many, I think I need use no other Per**fwafive** Mint.

fwafive to recommend this excellent Expedient of Holy Living to our constant Practice: In all other things we love the most Compendious Methods, and to make use of fuch Means as lead most directly and by the shortest Line to the End we aim at. And why should we not follow the fame Method in the Practice of a Religious Life, the difficulty and confequence of which is enough to ingage us to feek out for the best and most forwarding Assistances? Now this certainly of all others will deserve that Character, being the most general Instrument of Perfection, and confequently the most Compendious way to it. Let us then be perswaded to make use of it, by setting God always before us, and having him always in our Thoughts, especially under this Threefold Confideration, as the Supream Good, as a Pattern, and as an Observer; fo shall we have a perpetual incouragement to do well, and a sufficient Counterpoile against all Temptations. And God grant we may fo fet him always

always before us here, that we may not be afraid to appear before him beleafter. Macainary accessos one they be live the treat Some Sin s Any or other, stories, seed charity show book assessment dank to entr' on hair destant our wishen y Show the few hat a sure of the state of the in badient waste ode work) together. Can Practice of at Religious Times to composituate, temp premits come of As the species of standard at holds - the state of the Arranda water conservat a military country and confirmation of the charge of that Orange is religious to the country of bes provided to an amendal forth Carlonardia Estam em y Engastras -194 - at healt out, to Fo . 15 01 1910 maded to white the shirt of babers Land or construct the new place of the Original enorgoni? who ai events and known Assorbly ander this Thronglet Con-Identicat; as the Suppose Carl. at a Patter and last on Objected supplied the service of the desired. Marketon and Mark to a second of waxy some it is admin to the present and God water the may the scartiffer erewin ....

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The doing God's Will on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

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Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.

O our Blessed Lord bids us to Pray, who came to be the Promoter of Holiness, as well as to be the Author of our Faith, and to Reform the World as well, as to Redeem it. Now as its the Perfection of

of the Natural World to be Conformable to the Understanding of God, those Immutable Ideal Representations which are in the Divine Mind; so is it the Persection of the Moral World to be Conformable to his Will; and in both these, the Second Person of the Sacred Trinity, the Eternal Word; seems equally and particularly concerned. As to the Natural World, St. John tells us, that all things were made by him, or according to him, John 1. 3. Si wire, and without him was not any thing made that was made. And St. 1 Col. 16. Paul, that by him were all things Created that are in Heaven, and that are in

ted that are in Heaven, and that are in

17. Earth; and that by him all things conHeb. 1.2. fift. Again tis faid, by whom also he

10. made the Worlds. And again, Thou,
Lord in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens
are the Works of thy Hands.

Then as to the perfecting the frame of the Moral World, as twas his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father himself, so was it his principal bufiness, and the Main of his Undertaking, to repair the Ruins of Morality, to inlarge the bounds of his Fathers King-

Kingdom, to make others conformable to the Divine Will, and Partakers of the Divine Nature; which in part has already taken effect, and of which (as we are told,) we are yet to expect a further accomplishment under his glorious Millennial Reign, when Righteousness shall flourish and be exalted, and the Will of God be done on Earth to a very near degree as it is in Heaven.

To this end serves the great Mystery of Godlines, that Grace of God which has appeared to the World teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lufts, we should live Soberly. Righteously and Godlily in this present World; the Covenant of Grace being so ordered and contrived, that our Duty is fecured, as well as our Infirmity and Necessity relieved, and our Repentance is only made effectual by the satisfaction of Christ, not unneceffary. To this End he gave us a new System of Christian Morals, which though no addition to the Eternal Law of Nature and right Reason, was yet a great Improvement of that of Moses. And he took care also to fecond

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fecond his excellent Precepts, by as excellent an Example, that they might appear to be Practicable as well as Resignable.

And here because Example has the greater Influence of the Two, he not only gave us an absolute one of his own, and exhorted us to the imitation of it, when he said, Learn of me, but also remits us to the excellent Example of the Angels, those ready Performers of God's Will, and winged Ministers of his Pleasure, in that he bids us Pray, Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Pleasure.

That God's Will is done in Heaven, is here supposed; we are therefore further concerned only to inquire

- is to be here understood?
  - 2. By whom it is done in Heaven?
- 3. After what manner it is there done?

lecons!

- do fo an an an analysis for us to

And First by Will; here our Lord cannot be supposed to mean that which is a Faculty in the Divine Effence or rather the very Essence it felf; for how may we Pray that that should be done, which Eternally and Necessarily is? Neither by Will here are we to understand the Act of Willing, for this can no more properly be faid to be done than the other a but that Will for the doing of which we here Pray, is the Res Volita, or the Object of the Divine Will: But then this is Two fold, either the Object of his Will Decreeing, or the Object of his Will Commanding; or to word it according to the ordinary distinction; the Will of his Decrees, or the Will of his Commands: And 'tis generally held that both these are to be here understood/ - Way 18th 9 box 115 MB Set Letter for

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of But I must confess it does not apcent to me how the Will of God's Decrees can be at all here concerned, any further than as our Submission to it is

a part of the Will of his Commands 4 for not to infift upon the necessary and uncontroulable accomplishment of God's Decrees, and that things necesfary and certain are not fo proper Objects of Prayer, I only observe that this Will of God is here defired to be done in Earth as it is in Heaven a which Suppoles it to be more perfectly performed in the one than in the other ; the latter being proposed as a Pattern and Precedent to the former. But now. as God is in all Places equally Almighty, fo are his Decrees in all Places alike performed in Earth as well as in Heaven, according to that of the Pfalmilt, Pfal. 135. What foever the Lord pleafed, that did be in Heaven and in Earth, and in the Sea, and the all deep Places; this therefore cannot be meant of the Will of God's Decrees, any further than as 'tis a part of the Will of his Commands that we should submit to them, and acquiesce in them. Neither indeed can this be directly and strictly intended

tended, but only by way of Propertion, that as the whole Will of God, which is capable of being done in Heaven is there done; so all that is capable of being done on Earth, should in like manner be there done. But I say it cannot be directly intended, there being no Afflictive Dispensations of Providence incident to those who do God's Will in Heaven, and consequently no toom for the Exercise of Patience and Submission; as will further appear by considering the Second Inquiry, namely, by whom it is that this Will of God is done in Heaven.

And this indeed is of no great Difficulty to resolve, since the nature of the Will does of it self point out to the Doers of it; for it being the Will of God's Commands, it can no more be done by God; than his possible for God to obey himself. Nor can it be done by the Celestial Bodies; for however these in a large and improper sense are sometimes said to obey God, as when the Pfalmist says, that the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Finmament stewers his Handy-work;

work; and that Wind and Storm fulfil his Word, and the like : Yet being necessary Agents, they cannot yield any Moral and Acceptable Obedience; much less in such an eminent and exemplary manner as to be a Pattern to us. which yet is here supposed. And yet they will be every whit as capable of this Obedience, as we are, if we be not free Agents; which by the way I leave to be confidered by those who deny that Priviledge to Human Nature. It remains therefore, that the Holy Angels are they that do this Will of God in Heaven; none else are capable of doing it, and of these the Psalmist fays expressly, that they fulfil his Commandment, and bearken to the Voice of bis Word.

Pfal. 103.

Proceed we therefore to the next Inquiry, namely, after what manner this Will of God is done by the Holy Angels in Heaven; that they do it after a very perfect and excellent manner, far exceeding the highest Meafures of Mortality, is here implied, in that they are proposed and commended to us as Patterns, and might be further concluded from the Perfection of their

their Natures and Faculties, which we cannot but suppose to be very extraordinary, since the excellency of our future Condition is summed up in this short Description, that we shall be like Luk.20.36.
unto the Augels.

But waving this Confideration taken from the Powers and Faculties of Angels as formewhat too Nice and Metaphysical for a Practical Discourse. I shall chuse rather to represent the great Excellency wherewith they perform the Will of God from Two Colleges Considerations.

that will not be led a that Ricks too

Inclinations; fo that the Soul is purto serious extension part of this with an Oppolite Laumord

Romans, separate Law of the Members, which Romans, separate Advantages of The Members, which Romans of the Second of the Second

And First, as to the Impediments they are free from: Tis the great disadvantage of all Human Spirits in this Station, as well as the complaint of some, that they are united with Bodies that are not proportioned to the Native Excellency and Activity of their Natures 3 for indeed the Soul has made Y 3

an ill Match, Marryed very much beneath her felf, and has med with a Cleg inflead of a Companion soone that is too weak to obey her Distates and Motions, and too strong to be governed; that cannot follow, and that will not be led; that flicks too close to her to be shaken off, and yet is too look from her to be well managed: Such un untractible all funed Confort as this must needs be a confrant incumbrance to the Soula even in her Natural but much more in her Moral and Spiritual Operations, because here the Constro has contrary Inclinations; fo that the Soul is put to incounter not only with that lordinary weight, but with an Oppolite Law, even that Law of the Members which Rom.7.23. Wars against the Law of the Mind, and brings us into Captivity to the Law of

Neither is this all, for we are not only combered with a weight of Plefts, and depressed by its low tendencies and propensions; but our Body which at best is but in an ill disposition for the Operations of the Rational and Divine Life, is often discomposed and made

made worfe by Sickness, and then the Soul is forced to sympathize and condole with her ill-suited Companion, and either not to act at all, or to perform her Part upon an ill-tuned las frument: And he that is bleffed with the strongest and most tunable Constitution, and enjoys the most vigorous Health, has yet a great many necessities of Nature to serve, that will take up much of his Thoughts and much of his Time; fo that he can't chuse but be troubled about many things, things below the concernment of a Rational Being, and that, though he has choler the Better Pant, and is so well convinced of his true interest, as to acknowledge only one thing to be needful,

Add to all this, that we breath in an infected Air, live in an ill World where every Object almost is a Temptation, and have a Devil to tempt and seduce us; one who makes it his proper and profest business to cross the Ends of God, to disturb the Moral Harmony of the Universe, and to hinder the symphony and agreement of the Two Worlds, that so God's Will may not be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven:

Heaven: And with these disadvantages

But now the Holy Angels have none of these Impediments; they have either no Bodies, or fuch as no way incommode or retard, but rather help and further their Faculties; for they are in the full height and last perfection of their Natures and confequently must not be supposed to have the least degree of any of their Natural Perfections detained or held back from exerting it felf by any clog or impediment; there being no reason imaginable why they should be invested with any degree of Power which must never be brought into Act, as it never must be if not at present, they being now supposed to be in the last Perfection of their Natures. They must be therefore conceived in this respect. to act like necessary Agents to the full and to the utmost of their natural Strength, and to have nothing in them that is not put forth as far as possibly can be. And belides, the Scripture always speaks of them under the denomination of Spirits, without making mention of any Bodies belonging to them ;

them; which must needs imply, that either they are all Pure Minds, (as the Platonists say of the highest Order.) or if they have Bodies, they are of fo refined and clarified a Mould, fo nigh to an Immaterial Subfrance, that Spirit might ferve as a common word for both. They have therefore no weight or load upon their Faculties, nothing to dead or flacken the Spring of their Nature, no Concupifcence to darken their Understandings of to pervert their Wills, no Indisposition, Languor or Weariness occasioned through crazy and fickly Vehicles, but are afways Fresh, Vigorous and Bright, like the life and quickness of the Morning, and rejoyce like the Sun to run their Courle. They have no Necellities to relieve or provide for, no impertinent Avocations to call them off from their noble Exercises, no ill Company to debauch them, no Devil to tempt and influere them, and therefore must heeds act with a full display of their Faculties, and be carried out uncellantly and intirely toward the Supream Good. with their whole bent and energy, as a Stone would tend toward the Center through an wirefifting Medium. 93150 But

But this will further appear, by confidering Secondly the politive advantages which they enjoy: Their great advantage is, that they have a constant and clear Vision of the Essence of the great God. Now I consider that the Essence of God is the very Essence of Goodness, is a rie massis, as the Dir vine Philosopher fitly calls him; whereupon I conceive that an Angel feeing God after this Effential manner, must have the same Habitude and Disposition to him, as one that does not thus fee God has to the common nature of Good. But now tis impossible that a Man thould either will or act any thing without attending to good in common, and without propoling that as his aim: And accordingly his as impossible that the Bleffed Angels should will or ad any thing without attending to God, and making him their End, as long as they have this Essential Vision of him; and of this they are never deprived, for our Lord fays of them, that they Mat. 18.10. always behold the Face of his Father which is in Heaven. This he speaks of the Missionery Angels that have the Charge and Office of Guardians bere upon

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upon Earth, that even they notwithstanding their imployment here, have a constant view of the Divine Effence. and are never interrupted in their Beatifick Vision ; much more then is this true of the Stationary Angels that wait upon the Throne of God, the Refedentiaries of Heaven. Whence it further follows, that it impossible they should ever Sing or do any thing contrary to the Divine Nature or Will For the Effence of God being Supposed to be the fame to them that good in geneish is to us, the Vision of it must needs wholly ingage and confamly retain all their Powers and Faculties; (for we can never will any thing out of the Sphere of Good in general, communicate a kind of Deiform Habit to their Natures, and render them in all things exactly conformable to the Divine Will. And accordingly the apportion derives our future likenes and comformity to God from our Vision of bin ; We foull be like bine, fays he, for Joh. 3.2. we thell fee hite as by to be bivin

This that he our Felicity hereafter a but it is the Priviledge of the Bleffed Angels to enjoy at now, and therefore by

by the strength of the same Argument it must be supposed that they are as like God as the clearest Vision of him can make them; that is, as like him as finite can be like infinite, as a Creature can be like its Creator. That they are exactly conformable to the Perfections of that Adorable Excellence which they behold, that they love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and that in all things they perform his Will and Pleasure in a more excellent manner than such impersect Thinkers as we are can either condeive or describe.

Thus in general; but now for a more particular account of the excellent manner of their doing the Will of God in Heaven, we are to confider manner of their doing the will of the confider manner of their doing the Will of God in Heaven, we are to confider manner of their doing the will be a particular of their doing the confider manner of their doing the confider manner of their doing the confider manner of the

First, That they do it with full Readings and Aluerny. Tis the necessary as well as unhappy Appendage of our Mortal frame, even in its best condition, to act with a mix'd Consent and a divided Choice: Sin indeed we sometimes do with a full and thorough Consent, without any renitencies to the contrary side; but our resolutions to Good are mixt and impersed; for the

the most part we do not go so far, but tis our highest atchievement to conquer and prevail against the tendencies of the Animal part, not to be without them. And though after some uncertain Vibrations, the Scale does at length weigh down for Duty and Obedience vet still there is some weight in the other Ballance, and the Motion though Victorious, yet is not intire and unrefifted. But now the Holy Angels being free from the impediments of a contrary Principle, perform the Will of God with a full, intire and perfect Confent; they have no Demurs or Disputings, no Reluctancies or Aversions, but at the first intimation approve and execute the Will of God with all the readiness and alacrity of an intire, pure and undivided Will. And accordingly in the Prophet Isaiab's Vision of God in his Glory, the Seraphim appeared with Six Wings, With twain be covered his Face, (the 16. 6.2. Text fays.) with twain he covered his Feet, and with twain he did fly. But to the Prophet Exekiel, the Vision was Ezek. 10. inlarged, for to him the Cherubims were represented with Wings and Wheels, both of them being very fignificant

nificant and lively symbols of that eminent Alacrity and Agility wherewith the Holy Angels perform the Will of God.

The Jews indeed have a Proverb. that the Angel of Justice flies but with one Wing; but hereby I conceive they intend only the flowness of God in iffuing out Commissions of Vengeance, not that of the Angels in putting them in Execution: For they for the Reafon of the Command as well as the Letter of it; or if not, yet the clear Vision they have of the Divine Essence and Perfections, will not fuffer them to doubt of the Equity and Reasonablenels of all his Injunctions, as being well affored that nothing but what is highly Reasonable can be the result of Infinite Wildom and Goodness: So that they are as well fatisfied with the Decrees of Vengeance, as with the milder Emanations of his Love, and perform them both with equal Chearfulness. Thus we fee the Angel who was Commissioned to keep laps'd Man out of Paradife with his Flaming Sword, betook himfelf as readily to the ungrateful Office, as he that was to carry the

the welcom Tidings of Man's Redemption to the Shepherds, and to fing Glory to God on high, on Earth Peace
and Good Will towards Men. And I
question not but that those Sons of
God which shouted for joy at the laying the Foundations of this great Fabrick, will hereafter upon the Signal
given, be fill as ready to affist to its
Destruction and Fiery Dissolution. But
we are upon the same Grounds to consider

newirma) well waiters in the control of Secondly, That their Obedience is Uniform and Universal as well as ready and Chearful, and that they have an equal respect to all the Commands of God. Upon the fame Principle that they are Ready and Chearful, they are also Uniform and Universal in their Obedience; for the reason why they Obey chearfully, is either because they are Convinced of the particular Equity and Reasonableness of the Law, or because they are convinced of the unerring Wildom of the Law-giver, whom they know they may fafely rely upon by an implicit Confidence. though they should not be able to account in particular for the Reason of Historian what

what he Commands And the fame will be a fufficient fatisfaction why they thould obey him Universally, fince every Precept either carries its own Evidence and Renfon with it, or what is as good, an Inducement to Obedience the undeceivable Reafon of him that gives it. This is the Principle of Believing all that God Reveale, Mysteries as well as intelligible Articles, and the fame is the Principle of Obeying all that God Commands. And wherever there is a clear Conviction of this, there Obedience must needs be as Universal as Faith, as having the fame Grounds and Inducements: And there being no reason to question but that there is the highest Conviction of this in the Minds of Angels, we may proceed to confiders described by some cath what expast othered a mind body

Thirdly, With what Constancy they perform the Divine Will: They obey with Constancy not only as 'tis opposed to final Cessation, but as 'tis opposed to the least Interruption. The highest Perseverance we can pretend to in this Region of Inconstancy, is not to fall off totally or finally; nor are we sure of so much as that. But to maintain

maintain a fleddy Course of Obedience without the least interruption. is beyond the measures of Fiells and Blood. But now the Holy Angels are not only fecure from either total or final Apoltacy, but even from the least abatements or interruptions of Duty for the Excellence which they Contemplate is always the fame, and fo alting it. "They Contemplate the Face of God as the Philosopher fays of the Supream Intelligences, A'el is woodras, always and alike, and confequently cannot but love and adore him with a constant and uninterrupted Flame of Devotion, the Glorious Effence of God being the fame to them that the dommon nature of Good is to us, as was observed before: To which there is this further Advantage to be added, that their Understandings are never under an Eclips, no not fo much as in part; but as they always receive equal Illumination from God; fo do they fhine upon their Wills with an equal Light; and confequently they must needs stand always equally affected and disposed to what is good, as appearing to them always in a Light equally

equally advantagious. For the variety and changableness of our Wills procoeds from the variety of our judgments and were our Thoughts and Apprehentions of things always uniform our Actions would be to toos for the always act as for that inflant we think. This therefore being the happy condition of Angels, to have the Eye of their Understanding always equally awake, and in full ilhumination, there must needs be also a constant regularity in their Wills. The fliort is, as long as they Contemplate the Divine Effence, they cannot divertafide to any thing irregular, bethe Divine Good, which fills and wholly ingages their Faculties; and for the fame reason they cannot chuse but for ever to Contemplate. And herein I suppose must be placed that happy Nereffety the Holy Angels are under, of doing the Will of God, and of perfevering in it to all Eternity; and that this is that which we mean, when we fay they are Confirmed in good.

lencits a while to their Happy and Noble

Noble Employments, before we go further, let us fee how thefe Speculations may be improved to the benefit of our Practice: And First, since God has made his Angels fuch excellent and accomplished Creatures, let us make the same rife of it that the Pfilmist did when he rook from hence an occelion of Printe and Thankigiving, Regise the Lord Omy Soul, says he and and then mentioning fome Characters of his Greatness, he adds, He maketh his Pal. 1044. Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flawing Fire. Indeed the Angels are the greatest Occasions as well as Informents of Praile, jas being the Noblest part of the Divine Workmanship; Look Eccl.43.12.
upon the Rain bow, and praise him that made it, fave the Son of Sirach: And if God is to be Praised for the Beauty of the Rain-bow, caused only by various Reflections and Refractions of the Globules of the Second Element in their passage through a Cloud, how much more is he to be adored for these great Master-pieces of his Art, these Closet-Draughts of his Beauty

hence to beware of that Voluntary

Z 2 Humility

Hamility which the Apostle speaks of, and were he now alive, would have fresh Occasion given him to Condemn. in Worthipping Angels; take heed to thy felf, left when than liftest up thine Eyes to Heaven, and feel the Sun, and the Moon and the Stars, even all the Hoft of Heaven, thou shouldeft be driven to worthip them, fays Deut.4.19. Mofer to the People of Ifraet: And there is the same and greater danger here, when we Contemplate the Glory of this other Heavenly Hoft; for however through Envy or Emulation we usually leften and disparage one anothers Excellencies, yet when we have to do with Creatures of another rank and order, we are apt to be guilty of the opposite extream, and to exchange Detraction for Idolatry.

Thirdly, We have here a most excellent Antidote against Pride, which is a littleness of Mind that arises from our Ignorance of the World about us as well as of our Selves; and consequently is best Cured by considering what Excellencies there are above us. The young Home-bred Heir that thinks his Father's Mannour a considerable

rable part of the World, is fent abroad to see more of it, and returns Home Cured by his Travels. And would the Man that fwells and looks big upon his Parts or Learning but beltow a Thought, or Two upon the Perfections of Angels, I dare warrant him his Plumes will quickly fall, and that he will never find in his Heart to fet up for a Wit more: For alas, what are we to the Angels? Hereafter indeed 'tis to be hoped, that some of us may be made like them; but what are we in Comparison now? They excel us more than we do the Bealts of the Field, and we need nothing elfe but this one Confideration well thought upon to convince us, That Pride was not made for Man.

Fourthly, we may learn hence to to fear the Devil, as to look upon him as a confiderable Advertary, and not to be too fecure in our best Condition; for he is an Angel still, and we know not what he has lost by his Fall, besides that Grace and Goodness whereby he might be disposed to help and bestiend us. And the Apostle tells us, that we still wrestle against Principalities and Powers:

Powers: And therefore it concerns us to provide our selves accordingly, and as he there advises, to take unto

Ephel. 6. us the whole Armour of God.

Lastly, we should endeavour to imitate all the Moral and Imitable Excellencies of the good Angels; our Saviour has made them our Pattern in his Prayer, and we should make them so in our Lives, by endeavouring to perform God's Will in Earth as it is in Heaven: Which calls upon me to return to the Fourth Enquiry, namely, How far we are concerned to imitate this Pattern of Obedience.

That our Imitation of it is in some Measure or other required, is most certain, otherwise our Lord would never have taught us to Pray that God's Will should be done on Earth as it is in Heaven; but how far is the Question? In answer to which, I observe that the Obedience of the Angels may be considered either Intensively, or Extensively; or in other Words, either with respect to the Act, or with respect to the Object; which last may again be meant either of the kinds of Good, or of the several degrees in each kind.

This

This being premifed, I answer, First, That we are not obliged to the linenge. we are not obliged to, because its not among the zil io a pass, the things which are in our Power. This indeed will be part of our Remard hereafter, but it cannot be our Duty here; and then fore though we are to obey God readily and chearfully, yet its not required we should do it with such a degree of Alacrity as excludes all imperfect motions to the contrary. Tis not required while we are a Compound of Flesh and Spirit, that the latter should be wholly free from the Solicitations of the former; 'tis fufficient if it have the Casting Voice, and prevail in the Contention; and so much indeed is Duty. And therefore fays the Pfalmift, He that now goes on his way weeping, and Plal 126. beareth forth good Seed, Shall doubtlefs come again with Joy, and bring his Sheaves with him: He must bear forth good Seed, and if he does to, it shall be no Prejudice to him that he goes on his way weeping.

Neither

Neither are we obliged to ferve Cod always with equal heights of Devotion, and with an uniform fervency of Mind; for belides that our Saviour himself who led the most Angelical Life, pray'd at some times more earnestly than at others this depends in a great measure upon the various junctures of Circumstances, and the various impressions of Objects from without, and the different fineness and quickness of the Animal Spirits within, with many other Accidental Dispositions which are not in our Power. We are only accountable for the Motions of our Wills; and for ebbs and flows of Passion no further than they are at the disposal of the other; and therfore if we Sail by a true Compass, and steer our Course to the right Point, we do our Duty, and are not Chargeable for want of Gusty Blasts, and Swelling Sails, which are not in our Power to have

Then Secondly, as to the Extensiveness of Angelical Obedience, if this be considered in the First Sense, with respect to the kinds of Good, we are certainly obliged to have our Obedience obey the whole Will of God. For the fincerity of our Obedience can no otherwise be justified than by its Universality and Uniformity; Uniformity as to the Object, though not as to the Act; and therefore its that the Psalmist Prays, O that my Ways were so direct that I might keep thy Statutes; so shall I not be consounded when I have respect unto all thy Commandments.

to tone I am it is will be an arm our siels But if the Extensiveness of Angelical Obedience be confidered in the latter Senfe, with respect to the several Degrees in each kind of good, so we are not bound to come up to the Meafures and Attainments of Angels, and that because 'tis beyond the Capacity of our present Condition. Nay, I think we are not strictly obliged under Pain of Sin, to attain to all the degrees of good which we possibly can, or always to do what is simply Best; for I think it plain from Scripture, that the Degrees of good admit of Counsel as well as Precept, and of Perfection as well as Duty: Much less therefore are we obliged to the full extensiveness of Angelical Obedience as thus confidered:

It

If we are not bound to our Best, much less to their Best.

But befides this way of confidering the Extensiveness of the Angelical Obedience as to the kinds and degrees of Good, there is yet another, namely with respect to Time or Continuance ; this is what we otherwise call their Perseverance or Constancy of Obedience: Now as to the Measures of our Obligation to this, we are to distinguish and consider the Gospel in a double Capacity, as a Law, and as a Covenant; if we confider it as a Covenant, then we are not obliged to a constant and all the way along continued Obedience. For 'tis not uninterrupted, but only final Perseverance that is the condition of the Covenant. But if we confider it as a Law, then we are not only obliged to a final, but to an uninterrupted Perseverance, that is, we are not only required to be found at our last Exit in a state of sincere Obedience, (which is the Condition of the Covenant,) but also to continue all the way in it: For every deliberate and voluntary interruption of it is Sin, and fuch as while unrepented of, intitles us to, and if never repented of, will

will actually bring upon us Damnation.

Having thus in thort flated the general Measures of our Conformity to the Angelical Pattern, which are also the Measures of our Evangelical Obedience, I come now laftly to confider how Reasonable it is that we should do thus; and certainly if any thing in the World be reasonable, 'tis that we should do the Will of God; for the Will of God is the highest Reason. Indeed were God an Arbitrary Humerforn Being, that loved to domineer over his Creatures, and to impose on them harsh and troublesom Commands only for his own Pleafure, and to shew his Authority; though even then we should justly owe him Homage and Obedience, yet there might be some pretence for disputing it, and making demurs about it. But God is to good and kind as to enjoyn us nothing but what is purfuent of the End for which he Greated us; that is, our Happiness and Perfection: So kind as to link our Duty and Interest together, and to make those very things the instances of our Obedience, which are the natural Means, and necessary Coules of our Happines: So that were we to

to contrive a way to make our Condition Happy, we could pitch upon no better than what he has already prescribed to us in the Laws which he has given us. So highly confonant and agreeable are they to the frame of our Natures, and fo absolutely necessary are they both to the order of this present World, and to the Happiness of the next. This might easily be demonstrated of every one of the Divine Commandments in particular, but that being too long an Undertaking for the close of a Discourse, I only consider that we have a certain ground to conclude what the Will of God must be in reference to us, by what he is in himfelf; for this is an evident Principle, That such as God himself is, such must be his Will, it being unconceivable that he should will any thing contrary to his Nature. But now we all take God to be a Being Effentially and Immutably Wife and Good, Holy, Just and True; and if these are Properties inseparable from the Nature of God, (as all grant they are, ) then the Will of God must also be Holy, Wise, Just, True and Good, and confequently highly fit and reasonable to be Obeyed. But

ut Heaven'y tolk, thois excellent But why O God do we want Reafon to perswade us to do thy Will & Is it not enough that it is Thine & Thine who art the great Greator and Governor of the World, and haft the highest right to be ferved by all the Greatures, and by all the Powers which thou haft made? Thine, who art the best and greatest Being, who are infinitely Wife, Holy, Just and True, and canst therefore command nothing but what is for Thine, who art above all capacity of addition to thy Happinels, and canst therefore propose no good but that of thy Creatures in the Laws that thou givelt them? Why then do we inquire after the Reafon of thy Will? It ought to latisfy us that it is Thing.

And fince this Will of God is done in Heaven, why should it not be done on Earth? Since the Blessed Angels who can discern the Reasons of things, even the deep things of God, and are infinitely better able to judge of the Reasonableness of Obedience than we are; since they are so ready and forward to pay it, why should we make any Question or any Delay about it? Since the great

great Heavenly Host, those Excellent Beings that excel both in Wisdom and Strength, acknowledge and submit to the Government of God, why should we a little handful of Rebels, stand out? Since the Will of God is done in Heaven, why is it not on Batth? Yes, it is done on Earth, for at his Commandment the Waters flow, and the Wind and Storm sulfit his Word; only Man disorderly Man, will not be Obedient, though he has a God for his Maker, and Angels for his President.

But let as many of us as hope to be like Angels hereafter, study to be like them here; let us seriously and diligently endeavour to write after sofair a Copy, and set before us the Holy Angelsas Pattern; as well as Observers in all our Actions, which would certainly work more upon us, than that Expedient so much advised by a great Man, the imaginary presence of a Cato or a Lehus. Let us make it our eare as much as in us lies by the Angelical Piery and Regularity of our Lives to restore the Moral World to that Symphony and Uniform Harmony wherein God made it, and not only Pray, but also heartly Endeavour that the Will of the great God may be done here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

But